CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

FRIDAY ▸ APRIL 24, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 279 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
Certified English Daily

Iran tightens grip over Hormuz post peace talk collapse P9

'AI brings risks, openings for fintech sector' P11

Allu Arjun & Lokesh Kanagaraj's AA23 Shooting Begins in May P12

www.ibcworldnews.com | BENGALURU ▸ HUBBALLI ▸ MANGALURU ▸ MYSURU ▸ KALABURAGI | cityhilights.news@gmail.com

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2026

WB, TN SEAL THE POLL DEAL

Both states registered record voter turnout in the elections held under the shadow of allegations of mass disenfranchisement of voters through the Election Commission's controversial SIR exercise

KOLKATA/CHENNAI

Voters turned up in large numbers to exercise their franchise in the elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly and 152 constituencies of the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday.

Amid sporadic violence, intimidation and assaults, West Bengal recorded brisk voting in the first phase with a turnout of 91.46%. Tamil Nadu registered approximately 84.41% voter turnout.

In West Bengal, the first phase of the Assembly elections, covering 152 out of the total 294 constituencies, saw 91.46 per cent of the 3.60 crore electors turn up to vote.

The voter turnout is among the highest in recent electoral history of the state. Notably, the elections were held under the shadow of allegations of mass disenfranchisement of voters through the Election Commission's controversial SIR exercise.

Multiple districts of Bengal reported exceptionally high voter turnout figures, underscoring an energised electorate, amid the shadow of allegations of massive disenfranchisement of voters through the Election Commission's controversial SIR exercise. Polling in 16 districts began at 7 am amid tight security to decide the electoral fate of 1,478 candidates, including 167 women, in 152 constituencies of the 294-strong state Assembly. Dakshin Dinajpur emerged as the frontrunner with 81.49% voter turnout, followed closely by Paschim Medinipur at 81.07%, Jhargram at 81.04%, and Birbhum at 80.22%.

Tamil Nadu, while trailing behind West Bengal in overall turnout, still posted encouraging numbers across its districts. About 82.24% of the 5.73 crore eligible voters exercised their franchise in the election to the 234-member strong Tamil Nadu Assembly, a record turnout. People voted in 75,064 polling stations in 33,133 locations to decide the fate of 4,023 candidates. Namakkal led the state with 76.43%, closely followed by Karur at 76.08%, Salem at 75.79%, Erode at 75.61%, and Tiruppur at 75.38%.

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

STATE	2021	2026
WB	85.2%	91.91%
TN	76.6%	84.80%

Election 2026

TAMIL NADU
Total seats: **234**
Voters: **5.73 crore**
Candidates: **4,023**

WEST BENGAL
Seats: **152 (of 294)**
Voters: **3.60 crore**
Candidates: **1,478**

Highest voter turnout since Independence: CEC

After the conclusion of polling, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar described the record turnout as the "highest since Independence" in both states and saluted voters for participating in the "festival of democracy" in such large numbers. "Highest ever percentage of polling in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu since Independence - ECI salutes each voter of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu," Kumar said.

POLICE CONSTABLE STABBED AT TN POLLING BOOTH

Mayiladuthurai: A head constable deployed on election security duty was stabbed by a retired serviceman inside a polling booth in the Poompuhar Assembly constituency in Mayiladuthurai district on Thursday, triggering panic among voters. The head constable, Vignesh from the Kuthalam police station, sustained injuries on his neck and both hands in the attack. The accused has been identified as Prabhakaran of Kattucherry, a retired army personnel.According to police, the head constable was on security duty at the polling booth.

May 4 will be TMC's expiry date: Modi

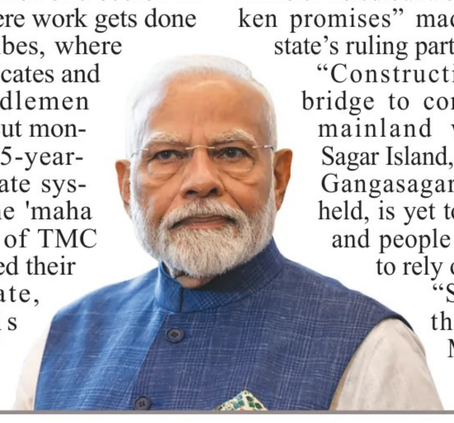
'Bumper voter turnout signals regime change in Bengal'

PARGANA (WB)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said May 4, when votes will be counted, would mark the "expiry" of the "TMC's 15-year-old syndicate system and maha jungle raj" in West Bengal.

Addressing a rally at Pargana district's Kakdwip Stadium under the Mathurapur Assembly constituency, he claimed that the massive poll turnout in the state indicated that the TMC's regime of 'bhoy' (fear) was "surely getting defeated" by the 'bharosa' (trust) the BJP has promised.

"There's not one sector in Bengal where work gets done without bribes, where TMC syndicates and their middlemen don't take cut money. That 15-year-old syndicate system and the 'maha jungle raj' of TMC have reached their expiry date, which is May 4," Modi said.



Holding the Mamata Banerjee dispensation responsible for making "false promises and betraying people", the prime minister listed out a set of "broken promises" made by the state's ruling party.

"Construction of a bridge to connect the mainland with the Sagar Island, where the Gangasagar Mela is held, is yet to take off, and people still have to rely on ferries.

"Similarly, the Ghatal Master plan to curb floods is a non-starter, and the district-based food parks and projects to tackle river bank erosion are yet to see the light of the day," Modi said.

The prime minister alleged that the TMC "not only stops the implementation of central projects, it also gobbles up the Centre's money meant for development projects". "This can only be stopped once you have a BJP CM in the state," he added.

Modi accused the TMC of "collaborating with the Congress" to derail his government's bid to implement 33% women's reservation in legislatures in 2029 in the Lok Sabha.

Karnataka SSLC 2026 hits record pass rate

2025: 66.14% | 2026: 94.10%

BENGALURU

The state has witnessed record-high of 94.10% pass results in history in the SSLC examinations this time after pass marks were reduced to 33%.

The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) announced the results on Thursday.

Students who scored 13 marks in the written exams and 20 in internal assessment have passed. Excluding the Covid year result (100%), this is the highest result recorded in SSLC history for the first time.

Primary Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa, while announcing the results on Thursday, noted that girls have outperformed again this time. "Like PUC, SSLC has seen record results. "I congratulate the students", he said while pointing out that a total of 7,24,794 students had passed.

No SSLC exam 3

There will be no SSLC Exam 3 and the Education Department will conduct only Exam 2. The last date to apply for answer sheet scanning is April 26 and the last date for answer script re-totaling, revaluation is May 4. The SSLC Exam 2 timetable was also announced and it will be held from from May 18 to May 25. There will be no Exam 3 due to high results Failed students can apply free of cost, the minister said.

Fee must be paid if applying for marks improvement, but there will be no fee if a student has failed in third language. There will be no fee even if applying for third language marks improvement. Across nine third language subjects, a total of 17,000 students failed, the minister noted.

The minister clarified that no grace marks were given for third language. "Let's discuss the third language issue another day, not now," he said.

Enroll children in govt schools, colleges

He urged parents to enroll children in government schools and colleges. "We are improving basic infrastructure, so enroll in government schools/colleges", he added.

DISTRICT-WISE PASS PERCENTAGE

- 1st: DK 98.40%
- 2nd: Udupi 98.18%
- 3rd: UK 98.09%
- Last: Kalaburagi 85.06%

Girls: 3,77,922 (96.18%)
Boys: 3,46,871 (91.94%)

Urban students
3,05,533 (93.2%)

Rural students
4,19,261 (94.80%)

Cong has crossed 'red line', warn Muslim religious leaders

BENGALURU

A coalition of Muslim religious leaders in Bengaluru has issued a stern warning to the ruling Congress government in Karnataka, asserting that the party has crossed a 'red line' with recent expulsions of its leaders and demanded immediate "reinstatement".

They expressed their resentment over the party expelling MLC Abdul Jabbar and removing MLC Naseer Ahmed as the chief minister's political secretary over alleged "anti-party" activities during the April 9 Davangere South bypolls. "The action against its Muslim leaders is not an isolated administrative decision but a reflection of a deeper pattern, one that signals selective targeting and shrinking space for Muslim leadership," members of a council of Ulemas, Imams, Khateebs and institutional leaders from across the state alleged during a press meet. Stating Muslims were stakeholders and not spectators, the council members reminded that their mandate was based on trust and a shared vision for inclusive governance. "Today, the trust has eroded. We demand reinstatement of our leaders and policy correction as the Hijab issue is unresolved and there has been no review of the 4% reservation," they rued.

SHOOT AND KILL MINE-LAYERS: TRUMP

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Thursday said he has ordered the U.S. Navy "to shoot and kill any boat" that is laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz.

"There is to be no hesitation," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post.

The president added that he is ordering U.S. minesweepers to continue clearing the strait "at a tripled up level!"

The post shows the US ratcheting up tensions with Iran over the vital oil-shipping route, which has been largely choked off since the war began in late February.

Trump has aggressively pushed Tehran to fully reopen the strait as part of a shaky ceasefire, which was set to expire this week before being unilaterally extended by the president.

The US has imposed a retaliatory naval blockade on Iranian ports in the region, in an effort to force Tehran to loosen its grip on the waterway and come to the negotiating table.

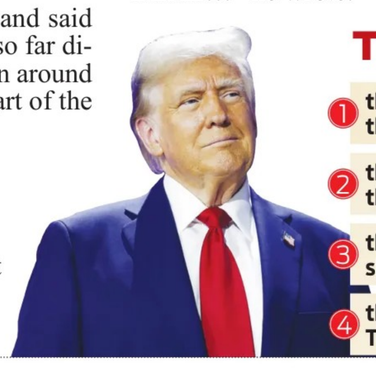
US Central Command said overnight that it has so far directed 31 ships to turn around or return to port as part of the blockade.

'America, not Iran, calling shots in Strait'

Trump insists that America, not Iran, is calling the shots in the strait. "We have total control over the Strait of Hormuz," he wrote in another Truth Social post later Thursday morning.

"No ship can enter or leave without the approval of the United States Navy. It is 'Sealed up Tight,' until such time as Iran is able to make a DEAL!!!" he wrote.

Less than 15 minutes later, Trump approvingly reposted a Washington Post opinion piece titled, "Trump doesn't need a deal to get what he wants from Iran." "Very true!!!" Trump wrote. Tanker traffic remains far below pre-war levels in the strait, which normally serves as the pathway for 20% of the world's oil.



TRUMP ORDERS...

1. the US Navy "to shoot and kill any boat" that is laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz.
2. the US minesweepers to continue clearing the strait "at a tripled up level!".
3. the Navy not to allow entry or exit of any ships without its approval.
4. the Navy to keep the Hormuz 'Sealed up Tight,' until Iran is able to make a DEAL!!!".

Indians now won't need airport transit visa in France

PARIS

The French Embassy in India on Thursday said that from April 10 2026, Indian nationals possessing an ordinary passport are no longer required to hold an airport transit visa (ATV) when passing through the international zone of airports located in French territory.

It said, "This measure applies to passengers remaining in the international zone during a layover at a French airport en route to a third country."

In a post on X the Embassy wrote, "As of 10 April 2026, holders of ordinary Indian passports no longer require an Airport Transit Visa (ATV) when transiting through the international zone of any airport in France, as announced by President Macron during his recent India visit."

As per reports, updated rules have been incorporated into the official France-Visas platform, reflecting the new and smoother procedure for Indian travellers.

The development is expected to simplify travel, reduce costs and ease planning for Indian passengers using key European airports as transit hubs, making long-haul journeys smoother and more accessible.

WOMEN ENTRY

Respect all views except WhatsApp University: SC in Sabarimala case

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it respected the perspectives of eminent persons and jurists but advised circumspection against information circulating through "WhatsApp University", which cannot be treated as credible or accepted.

A nine-judge Constitution bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant made the observations while hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala Temple in Keralam, and on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practiced by multiple faiths.

The bench also comprised Justices BV Nagarathna, MM Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan, and Joymalya Bagchi.

Senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, representing the head of the Dawoodi Bohra community, referred to an article written by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. The bench was informed that the Congress leader's article discussed judicial restraint in matters of religious relief.

On this, CJI Kant said, "We respect all eminent persons, jurists, etc., but personal opinion is personal opinion."

Kaul said if knowledge and wisdom come from any source, any country, any university, it should be welcomed.

"We are far too rich as a civilisation not to accept all forms of knowledge and information," Kaul said.

In a lighter vein, Justice Nagarathna said, "But not from WhatsApp University." Kaul said he was not getting into that.

Kaul said he is not into "which university is good or bad", which is really inconsequential to this debate. He emphasised that the point is simply that wherever knowledge and information come from, they must be accepted.

Trump reposts letter calling India, China 'hellholes'

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has reposted a controversial letter on his platform, Truth Social, that refers to countries such as India and China as "hellholes" while arguing against birthright citizenship in the United States.

In the reposted text, the author criticises the policy of granting automatic citizenship to those born on US soil.

It claims that such provisions allow immigrants to establish a foothold in the country through childbirth, suggesting that a child born in the US becomes an "instant citizen" and can later enable extended family members to migrate.

The write-up situates the argument within the ongoing debate over birthright citizenship, asserting that the issue should be decided by American citizens rather than the courts.

It also targets legal institutions and advocacy groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), alleging that they influence policies that enable illegal immigration and place strain on public systems.

Further, the letter claims that immigrants take advantage of welfare and healthcare services, particularly in states such as California, and links these assertions to broader cultural and economic concerns.

It also calls for action under laws against the ACLU and urges stronger measures from the Trump administration.

We've seen some reports: MEA

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday responded to US President Donald Trump sharing a post calling India, China, a 'hellhole on the planet'. MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We've seen some reports. That's where I'll leave it." Further, talking about the India-US trade deal, Jaiswal said a team from India went to Washington DC for negotiations. "These engagements are ongoing and constructive. Both sides are working towards a balanced, mutually beneficial and forward-looking trade agreement, taking into account each other's concerns and priorities, and to reach a trade target of US $500 bill by 2030."

QUICK READ

Teen employee held for dumping foetus in factory toilet

BENGALURU

Rural police have arrested a 19-year-old employee of Foxconn for allegedly disposing of a foetus inside a toilet at the company's manufacturing facility near Devanahalli. The discovery in the women's restroom triggered panic at the unit, which employs over 25,000 workers. Factory management alerted police, who recovered the foetus and launched an inquiry. Based on preliminary findings, officers identified the woman and took her into custody. Police said the accused is unmarried and was reportedly in a relationship with a neighbour. Further investigation is underway.

GBA commissioner's identity faked in WhatsApp fraud case

BENGALURU

A cyber fraud case has been registered at Amruthahalli police station after fraudsters impersonated Greater Bangalore Authority Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar to solicit money via WhatsApp. The complaint was filed by gazetted officer MM Akshath of Sahakaranagar following suspicious messages received from an international number. Police said the accused misused the commissioner's name, designation and photograph to target officials, including State Election Commission Secretary H Amaresh. Authorities termed it a clear impersonation attempt to defraud individuals. A case has been booked against an unknown person, and further investigation is underway.

Woman held for killing lover after jealousy over ex-girlfriend: police

BENGALURU:

Police have revealed a disturbing motive behind the killing of a 29-year-old man, allegedly murdered by his partner in northwest Bengaluru after tensions over his renewed contact with a former girlfriend. The accused, 27-year-old Prema, allegedly killed LN Kiran at her residence in Anjananagar under Byadarahalli police limits. Investigators said the two, who worked together at a mobile service store in Rajajinagar, were in a relationship that had recently turned strained. According to police, Prema was keen on marriage, but Kiran had begun distancing himself. Matters escalated when she reportedly discovered photographs of him celebrating his ex-girlfriend's birthday. Officials said this triggered anger and jealousy, leading her to plan the crime.

Rs 410 crore fake tax receipt racket busted; key accused arrested

Massive inter-state fraud network used shell firms and bogus invoices

BENGALURU

Enforcement officers of the Southern Zone Commercial Tax Department have unearthed a massive ₹410 crore fraud involving fake tax receipts across multiple states, leading to the arrest of a key accused.The accused, Tauqeer alias Mohammed (42), was apprehended and produced before the Special Economic Offences Court, which remanded him to 14-day judicial custody. Officials said he was part of a wider network operating across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.Investigations revealed that the group set up dozens of shell companies using forged documents and fake identities. These entities generated bogus tax invoices without any actual supply of goods, enabling fraudulent claims of input tax credit and causing significant losses to the government exchequer.According to officials, the accused used fake rental and lease agreements to obtain business registrations. They allegedly created sole proprietorships and LLPs using stolen PAN and Aadhaar details, subsequently securing GST registrations based on fabricated credentials.Once registered, the network generated invoices for materials such as cement, iron bars, zinc sheets and pipes. These invoices were circulated among multiple shell entities—categorised as service providers, intermediaries and end buyers—to create a layered trail of transactions. Authorities found that several bank accounts were opened in the names of unsuspecting individuals to facilitate fund movement. The accused would rotate fake invoices across these accounts to claim illegitimate input tax credits, inflating transaction volumes without actual trade.

Officials said the fraud amount detected so far stands at ₹410 crore, including approximately ₹102.5 crore claimed through fake input tax credits. The network operated with precision, cancelling company registrations whenever authorities raised suspicion and restarting operations under new entities.

The racket not only defrauded the government but also misled contractors and traders who unknowingly became part of the fraudulent chain.Further investigation is underway to identify other members of the network and trace financial links. Authorities indicated that more arrests are likely as they continue to unravel the full scale of the operation and recover diverted funds.

Heatwave stress triggers substation fault, disrupts water supply in city

BENGALURU

Near-record temperatures over the past few days have put Bengaluru's power infrastructure under strain, triggering a rare substation failure that briefly disrupted Cauvery water supply to parts of the city.

Officials said a line breaker at the 220 kV station in Somanahalli experienced a flashover, affecting power supply to the pumping station at Tataguni. The disruption impacted operations of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), leading to a temporary interruption in water supply.

Engineers attributed the incident to extreme heat conditions, with temperatures at Somanahalli reaching around 37°C. The heat-induced stress caused damage to the B-phase current transformer, resulting in oil leakage due to thermal expansion.

A BWSSB engineer described the incident as rare, noting that while electrical faults are not uncommon, such a failure directly linked to heat stress had not previously been recorded at the site. The flashover created a high-voltage arcing situation, posing potential risks to equipment and personnel.

Technical officials said the breaker system failed to detect the fault in time, allowing the situation to escalate. However, response teams acted swiftly to contain the damage. The affected section was isolated, leaked oil was drained safely, and the damaged transformer component was replaced.

BWSSB Chairperson V Ram Prasath Manohar said the disruption was an outcome of extreme weather conditions and praised the prompt action of engineers in restoring operations.

Water supply was affected in several areas between 12:30 pm and 3 pm on Wednesday while repair work was carried out. Supply was subsequently restored once the system stabilised.

Absenteeism, duplication and rising costs plague Census house-listing exercise

BENGALURU

The ongoing house-listing phase of Census 2027 is facing serious setbacks in Bengaluru, with widespread absenteeism among field staff, duplication of work and mounting costs raising concerns over data integrity.

Officials said that of the 26,616 personnel deployed—including 23,700 enumerators and 2,900 supervisors—nearly 6,000 are absent without authorisation. Each enumerator is assigned around 200 households, but many have reportedly failed to complete even basic enumeration tasks.

A senior Bengaluru North City Corporation official noted that extreme heat and the absence of residents during daytime visits have led several enumerators to avoid fieldwork altogether. Despite this, some have allegedly claimed completion and received payments, triggering administrative concerns.

The situation has resulted in multiple blocks being reassigned due to incomplete or untouched surveys. Replacement enumerators, who are paid approximately ₹5,000 per month, have in several cases repeated the same pattern—leaving assignments midway or failing to complete them. As a result, some blocks are being handled by up to three different enumerators, even as work on the ground remains unfinished.

Nearly 6,000 staff absent as survey lapses trigger delays and cost escalation

In several cases, partially covered or untouched blocks have been reassigned, but replacement enumerators often repeat the same lapses, leaving surveys incomplete.

Officials from the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), which is overseeing the exercise across the city's five corporations, admitted that such lapses have led to duplication of surveys and, in some cases, nearly threefold expenditure. They warned that inconsistencies and missing records are increasingly being reported, putting the credibility of the entire exercise at risk.

GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has taken a strict stance, stating that accountability will be enforced and no blanket exemptions will be allowed. The issue has also drawn attention from employees with disabilities, some of whom have sought relief from field duties. While limited exemptions have been granted in specific cases, broader requests remain under review.

With the census exercise scheduled between April 16 and May 15, officials cautioned that unless immediate corrective measures are implemented, both public funds and the reliability of collected data could be severely compromised.

Funds released for milk societies to build own facilities: Somashekar

BENGALURU

MLA S T Somashekar said funds have been released under the MLA grant to help milk producer cooperative societies construct their own buildings across the constituency.

He was speaking at the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Gonipura Milk Producers' Cooperative Association under K Gollahalli Gram Panchayat in the Yeshwantpur Assembly segment. Emphasising support for farmers, Somashekar said the initiative aims to strengthen grassroots dairy infrastructure and ensure societies function independently in permanent premises.

The MLA criticised major political parties, alleging they had failed to genuinely support farmers despite making promises. He said governments often express concern but do not deliver meaningful relief, adding that farmers continue to face challenges that need consistent policy attention.

Highlighting welfare measures, Somashekar said low-interest loan facilities have been extended to farmers, while women's self-help groups are being provided zero-interest loans. He added that women's empowerment remains a priority in development initiatives.

Bangalore Milk Union (BAMUL) Director KM Krishnaiah said the cooperative sector plays a crucial role in supporting farmers by addressing their issues and ensuring government benefits reach them directly.

Local leaders and members of the cooperative sector attended the event, including association president Shivarudraiah and other office-bearers. Officials reiterated that strengthening cooperative institutions will improve livelihoods and create better opportunities for rural communities.

The move to provide dedicated infrastructure for milk societies is expected to enhance operational efficiency and support long-term growth in the dairy sector across the constituency.

FUEL SUPPLY STABLE IN KARNATAKA DESPITE GLOBAL TENSIONS, SAY OIL FIRMS

BENGALURU

Fuel supply across Karnataka remains stable despite geopolitical tensions in West Asia, with oil marketing companies assuring uninterrupted availability of petrol, diesel and LPG.

Public sector firms including Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum said there is no shortage of fuel in the state and that all retail outlets are functioning normally.

Officials highlighted that Karnataka has a robust petroleum infrastructure, including a refining capacity of 15 MMTPA and multiple storage terminals and depots in key locations such as Bengaluru, Mangaluru and Hubballi. This network ensures smooth transportation and consistent distribution across regions.

The LPG supply chain is also well established, with 12 bottling plants and over 1,200 distributors catering to consumers. Around 7,500 fuel stations operate across urban, rural and highway areas, providing widespread accessibility.

Authorities noted that a brief surge in LPG bookings was recorded in March due to panic buying. However, demand has since stabilised, and delivery timelines are steadily improving.

Digital adoption has increased significantly, with most LPG bookings now made through online platforms. The Delivery Authentication Code system has further strengthened transparency and accountability in cylinder distribution.Officials said special efforts are being made to supply smaller 5-kg cylinders to economically weaker sections and migrant workers. In addition, commercial LPG supply is being prioritised for essential services such as hospitals, schools and transport sectors.The state is also expanding cleaner energy infrastructure, including CNG outlets and electric vehicle charging stations, as part of long-term energy planning.

Hennur-Bagalur Road white-topping to be completed by June 15

BENGALURU

White-topping work on Hennur-Bagalur Road is set to be completed by June 15, with officials stating that major carriageway works will conclude by May, followed by footpath and utility works over the next three months.

Greater Bengaluru Authority Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao inspected the project site and directed officials to speed up execution. He instructed deployment of additional workforce and simultaneous development of buffer zones and footpaths alongside the ongoing roadwork.

The project, covering a 5.5-km stretch from Hennur Cross to Bagalur Cross, was initiated in April 2025 with an 11-month deadline. However, officials said progress was delayed due to phased traffic clearances. Work had to be carried out in limited stretches, with only a quarter portion of the road available at a time, and primarily during night hours.

A senior B-SMILE official said that each completed stretch had to be reopened to traffic before work could proceed on the next section, slowing overall progress. Over the past four months, authorities have allowed work on half the road at a time, significantly improving the pace of construction.

Officials noted that carriageway work is now nearing completion, while development of footpaths and buffer zones has also commenced. The project, estimated at ₹86.29 crore, spans two Assembly constituencies and is expected to ease traffic congestion once fully operational.

So far, approximately 4.2 km on one side and 2.2 km on the other side have been completed. Authorities expressed confidence that the revised timeline will be met, provided there are no further disruptions.

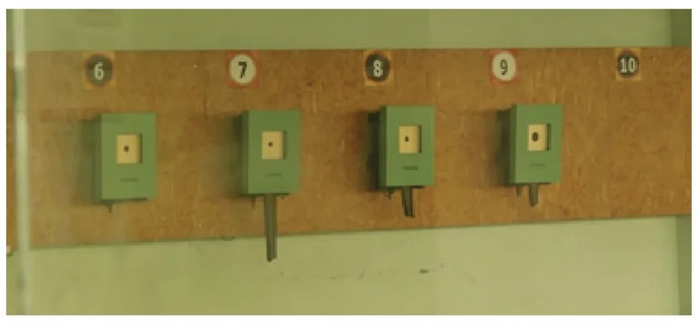
DEPRIVED OF FACILITY

Rs 13.5 cr shooting centre lies idle, students left waiting

BENGALURU

A major sports infrastructure project in Bengaluru, built to nurture young talent, has come under scrutiny for remaining unused years after completion, leaving aspiring shooters disappointed.

The shooting training centre located in Chennammanakere Achchukattu, under Basavanagudi constituency, has stayed closed to the public despite being inaugurated in December 2022 by former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. Constructed at a cost of ₹13.5 crore, the facility had raised expectations among students and parents, particularly in south Bengaluru.However, more than a year after its formal launch—and nearly four years since completion—the centre has seen no regular activity. Locals say the infrastructure has remained largely idle, denying budding shooters access to a dedicated training space.



The facility includes a 10-metre indoor air gun shooting range equipped for professional training. Despite this, the premises are reportedly lying unused, with equipment left unattended and gathering dust. Residents allege that the inauguration has remained largely symbolic, with no follow-up to operationalise the centre.Parents and students in the area have expressed frustration over the delay, noting that such facilities are crucial for developing sporting talent at the grassroots level. Many believe that access to a proper shooting range could open pathways for competitive training and participation at state and national levels.Civic observers have also raised concerns about the planning and execution of such projects, pointing out that building infrastructure without ensuring its utilisation results in wastage of public funds.

QUICK READ

Lineman dies of electrocution in Bidar district

Bidar

In Bidar district, a 31-year-old lineman named Bireesh died after suffering a fatal electric shock while on duty at Khatak Chincholi village in Bhalki taluk. The incident occurred around noon during maintenance work after line clearance had been obtained. Bireesh and fellow lineman Sachin were carrying out repairs when Bireesh climbed a distribution pole. After completing one jump, he attempted another and accidentally came into contact with a live wire, resulting in electrocution and a fall. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but died on the way. Khatak Chincholi police visited the site and conducted an inspection.

Grocery shop gutted in fire incident

Humnabad

In Bidar's Humnabad taluk, a grocery shop owned by Veerashetty Biradar was completely gutted in a fire at Kattalli village during the early hours. The fire is suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit and spread rapidly, destroying goods worth several lakhs and around □30,000 in cash. Shop owner Veerashetty Biradar, who depended on the business for his livelihood, expressed shock as the entire stock was reduced to ashes. Locals said strong winds and lightning may have worsened the fire, and urged authorities to provide immediate relief to the affected family. Fire service officials and police visited the site and assessed the extent of damage.

Suspicious death of labourer reported in Kalaburagi village

Kalaburagi

In Kalaburagi, a 29-year-old labourer named Saibanna was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Kusanur village on the outskirts of the city, Police said he worked in centering jobs and had left for work on Tuesday but did not return home at night. His family initially assumed he might have been resting due to his habit of alcohol consumption and began searching for him. However, his body was discovered on Wednesday morning in front of a local hotel. Police officials, including the City Police Commissioner, visited the spot and conducted an inspection. A case has been registered at University Police Station. Exact cause of death be determined after post-mortem report.

National Lok Adalat set for Vijayapura on July 11

Vijayapura to host National Lok Adalat on July 11 for speedy dispute resolution and settlements

VIJAYAPURA

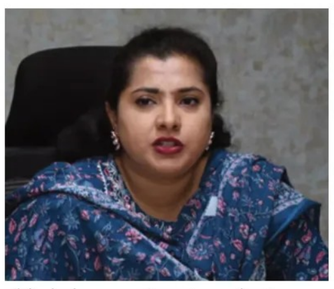
Acting on the directions of the National Legal Services Authority, a National Lok Adalat will be held on July 11 across Vijayapura district and all taluk courts to facilitate speedy settlement of pending and pre-litigation cases, said Principal District and Sessions Judge and District Legal Services Authority Chairman Harish A.

He was speaking at a meeting held at the video conference hall of the District and Sessions Court regarding LAC and LAC (EP) land acquisition cases. The Lok Adalat aims to provide litigants an opportunity to resolve disputes through mutual compromise, reducing long-standing court burdens and ensuring quicker justice.

The judge informed that daily Janata Court sittings are being conducted in all courts under the district from April to June 2026 between 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm, and from July between 4:45 pm and 5:45 pm. So far, around 120 LAC cases have been successfully settled through joint memos, reflecting the effectiveness of the initiative.He emphasized that farmers involved in land acquisition disputes can benefit significantly by resolving their cases through Lok Adalat without prolonged litigation. The system is designed to ensure faster compensation and reduced legal delays. During the meeting, First Additional District and Sessions Judge H.A. Mohan, Third Additional District and Sessions Judge Khadersab Hussainsab Benakatti, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Anand K., officials from KBJNL, UKP Almatti, SLAO Indi, advocates, and court staff were present.

Toor Dal procurement deadline extended till May 18

KALABURAGI



Kalaburagi extends toor procurement deadline till May 18 to help farmers sell produce under support price scheme and avoid distress sales.

The procurement period for toor (pigeon pea) under the 2025–26 support price scheme has been extended till May 18, according to Deputy Commissioner Fauzia Taranum. The decision has been taken to ensure that farmers receive fair benefit under the government procurement programme.

Officials stated that the extension comes in response to requests from farmers who were unable to complete the sale of their produce within the earlier deadline. The move is expected to provide additional time for smooth procurement and prevent distress sales in the open market.

The district administration has instructed procurement centres to continue purchasing toor without interruption until the extended deadline. Farmers have been advised to take advantage of the scheme and bring their produce to designated procurement centres with necessary documents.

Deputy Commissioner Fauzia Taranum emphasized that the government is committed to supporting farmers and ensuring that they receive the minimum support price for their crops. She also directed officials to maintain transparency and efficiency in the procurement process.

Authorities have also been asked to address issues such as long waiting times at procurement centres and ensure proper arrangements for storage and weighing of produce. Special attention will be given to avoid inconvenience to farmers during peak arrival days.The extension is expected to benefit a large number of farmers in Kalaburagi district, where toor is a major crop. Agricultural officers have been instructed to spread awareness about the extended deadline so that no eligible farmer misses the opportunity to sell their produce under the government scheme.

JD(S) stages protest in Kalaburagi accusing Congress of opposing women's reservation and blocking empowerment measures.

JD(S) PROTESTS CONGRESS OVER WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

KALABURAGI

The district women's wing of the Janata Dal (Secular) staged a massive protest rally in Kalaburagi against the alleged stance of the Indian National Congress on the Women's Reservation Bill.

The protest began at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Circle and proceeded towards the Deputy Commissioner's office, with party leaders and workers raising slogans against Congress. The demonstrators accused the party of opposing women's empowerment initiatives and blocking progress on reservation for women.

Addressing the gathering, JD(S) district president Balaraj Guttedar criticized Congress, claiming that its position on women's reservation has remained unchanged over the years. He alleged that during the tenure of former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda, a proposal for 33% reservation for women was introduced but did not succeed due to opposition from Congress. He also accused the party of creating obstacles to initiatives aimed at strengthening women's participation in governance.

District women's wing president Maheshwari Wali expressed disappointment, stating that what should have been a moment of celebration for women's reservation has instead turned into protests. She alleged that Congress has ignored women's rights and their long-pending demands for representation.

Several JD(S) leaders and party workers participated in the demonstration, including Basavaraj Birabitte, Shankar Gouda Patil, Mallikarjun Sangani, Mahantappa Madari, Vitthal Jadhav, Ravishankar Reddy, Manjugouda Patil, Rizwan Ahmed, Praveen Jadhav, Raje Patel, Kiran Patil, Shivalingappa Patil, Anwar Patel, and Sabir Gani. The protest concluded peacefully after submitting a memorandum to the authorities.

Jevargi municipal engineer jailed in bribery case

KALABURAGI

A junior engineer of Jevargi Town Municipality has been sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment and fined ₹20,000 after being found guilty in a bribery case by the Principal District and Special Court.The convicted official, Nanasab Amrutappa Madival, was held guilty for accepting a bribe in connection with a public works project. The case pertains to a 2016–17 municipal work involving a ₹35 lakh project for shifting an Ambedkar statue and constructing a platform over a drain within Jevargi municipal limits. The work had been executed by contractor Gopal Bijannur under the supervision of Parashuram Shankar Doddamani.According to the prosecution, the accused had demanded a bribe of ₹26,000 for releasing the second installment of the project bill. He was caught red-handed by Lokayukta officials while accepting the bribe on November 28, 2019.The case was registered by the Lokayukta Police under the supervision of DySP Sudha Adi.

Vijayapura heritage destroyed amid alleged administrative negligence

VIJAYAPURA

Once known for its rich historical monuments and architectural beauty, is now facing serious concerns over the alleged destruction of its heritage due to administrative negligence and corruption. The city, often described as a living museum of Deccan history, is reportedly witnessing unchecked commercial construction near protected monuments, raising alarm among citizens and heritage observers.According to regulations, no construction is permitted within 100 meters of protected heritage sites to preserve their structural integrity and historical value. However, reports suggest that several commercial buildings, shops, and unauthorized structures have come up dangerously close to these monuments, violating established norms.

Allegations have been directed at key institutions responsible for heritage protection, including the Archaeology Department and the Mahanagar Palika. Critics claim that instead of enforcing regulations, these bodies have failed to act, allowing violations to continue unchecked. There are also accusations of selective permissions and possible collusion in approving illegal constructions.

The situation has led to growing public concern, as Vijayapura's architectural harmony is being replaced by unregulated urban expansion. Locals argue that the city's cultural identity is being compromised in the name of development, with historical monuments increasingly overshadowed by modern concrete structures.Experts and citizens are now demanding a high-level independent investigation into the approvals granted near heritage sites, strict action against officials involved in violations, and removal or regulation of illegal constructions.As the situation worsens, questions are being raised about accountability and governance. Many fear that without immediate intervention, Vijayapura's invaluable heritage may suffer irreversible damage, turning a historic legacy into a lost opportunity for future generations.

Congress Women's wing demands immediate Women's Reservation implementation

KALABURAGI

The district women's wing of the Indian National Congress staged a protest in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office, demanding the immediate implementation of the Women's Reservation Act and accusing the BJP-led Union government of deliberately delaying the process.

During the protest, demonstrators expressed strong anger and symbolic dissent by burning and blackening effigies of certain political figures, including Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, Prajwal Revanna, and Kuldeep Singh Sengar. The protesters urged the central government to convene a special parliamentary session and enforce 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies without further delay or conditionalities.

They alleged that linking the implementation of the law to the upcoming 2026 Census and subsequent delimitation exercise amounts to denying timely political representation to women. According to them, the delay until 2034 would be unjust and defeats the purpose of the legislation.

Addressing the gathering, district Congress women's president Renuka Singe questioned the justification for postponement despite the law already being passed. She asked why women should wait when reservation could be implemented within the existing 543 Lok Sabha seats. She also stated that if the ruling party is genuinely committed to women's empowerment, it should immediately allocate 33% of election tickets to women candidates.

The protest also highlighted broader issues, including alleged government inaction in cases such as the Manipur violence, incidents involving women wrestlers, and the Bilkis Bano case. Leaders accused the Prime Minister of silence on these matters, arguing it contradicts claims of supporting women's safety and empowerment.

Several women leaders, including Vanishree Sagarakar, Sangeeta Patil, Geeta Mudgal, Manjula Patil, Lakshmi Sarasambakar, Saira Banu, Jayashree Chintapalli, and Shwetha Gajare, participated in the demonstration.

RAICHUR GOODS SHED

Railways drops Raichur goods shed relocation proposal

RAICHUR

The South Central Railway has officially dropped the proposal to shift the goods shed from Raichur Railway Station to Yermaras Railway Station, according to officials from the Guntakal Division.

In its communication, railway authorities stated that the proposal has been shelved due to existing rules and administrative constraints. It was also clarified that no work related to the project is currently being undertaken under the Gati Shakti Scheme.

The proposal to relocate the goods shed had been under consideration for several years. On September 21, 2021, then General Manager Gajanan Mallya had visited Yermaras station to assess the feasibility of the project. The Raichur District Chamber of Commerce had also repeatedly sought updates on its progress, highlighting its importance for regional logistics.

Railway officials had earlier identified around 9.5 acres of land at Yermaras station, along with additional space along the railway track, as suitable for developing a new goods handling facility. The project, estimated at ₹22.15 crore during 2020–21 and 2021–22, had already faced delays due to fund constraints.

Local representatives, including several Members of Parliament, had supported the relocation, stating that it would improve goods transport efficiency, especially for fertilizer movement, and reduce heavy truck traffic within Raichur city limits, thereby improving road safety.

However, with the latest decision to drop the proposal, stakeholders have expressed concern and discussion has intensified among traders and transport operators who had been expecting improved infrastructure and reduced congestion in the city.

North Karnataka reels under severe heatwave crisis

KALABURAGI

Karnataka is witnessing a sharp rise in temperatures, with several districts across the state struggling under an intense heatwave. From Bengaluru to Belagavi and Bidar to, people are battling extreme heat conditions, while North Karnataka districts are among the worst affected.

In Yadgir, authorities have installed green nets at Subhash Circle to provide shade for two-wheeler riders at traffic signals. In Kalaburagi, residents are increasingly relying on swimming pools to escape the scorching heat.

The heatwave has also begun affecting public health. In Raichur, newborns are reportedly suffering from dehydration, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Doctors have advised parents not to take children outdoors between 12 noon and 4 pm. In Kolar, a special 10-bed heatstroke ward has been set up at the district hospital to treat affected patients. Meanwhile, sightings of snakes emerging from burrows due to extreme heat have been reported Alongside the heat crisis, a severe drinking water shortage has worsened the situation.

QUICK READ

Wild elephant attack injures three forest staff

HASSAN

Three ETF forest staff were injured after a wild elephant attacked them in Cheekanahalli village of Beluru taluk. The incident occurred behind a hostel area near forest land while the team was tracking elephant footprints. Injured guard Ramesh is in critical condition, while staff members Vishwa and Jeevan also sustained injuries. The trio was rushed to Hassan district hospital for treatment. Forest officials visited hospital and checked their condition. Locals said the elephant suddenly charged during the inspection. Authorities have begun monitoring the animal movement and are assessing safety measures to prevent further attacks in region.

Gadag sets direct interview for job seekers

GADAG

The District Employment Exchange Office in Gadag will conduct a direct interview on April 29 at 10 am at the District Administration Building. The recruitment drive aims to provide job opportunities for unemployed youth in the district. Fukuku India Private Limited, Belagavi, an MNC company, will participate in the interview. Vacancies are available for Machine Operator and Assembly Department posts. Candidates with Diploma, BA, BCom, BBA or any degree between 18 and 26 years can apply. Selected candidates will be posted in Belagavi. Applicants must carry resumes, mark sheets, and Aadhaar copies. Officials said registration is mandatory on the interview day.

Hunsur police seize cattle, case filed

HUNSUR

Hunsur Rural Police seized eight cattle and a tempo vehicle on Harave–Marur road in Hunsur taluk on suspicion that they were being transported to a slaughterhouse. Police stopped the vehicle during inspection and detained the driver, identified as Syed Muqbal bin Syed Fasal (28). Officials said the accused, a resident of Hanchya village, has been taken into custody and is being questioned. A case has been registered under the Karnataka Prevention of Cattle Slaughter Act, 2020, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Police said further investigation is underway and legal action will follow.

MP warns doctors, pushes hospital reforms

MP Prabha Mallikarjun inspected Davanagere Women's Hospital, ordered better care, warned doctors, and sought improved specialist availability

DAVANAGERE

Member of Parliament Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun conducted a detailed inspection of the Women and Children Hospital in Davanagere and issued strict directions to improve patient care and basic facilities. During a review meeting after the visit, she expressed concern over gaps in service delivery and warned officials to ensure better treatment for patients.

She instructed hospital authorities to make sure that patients do not suffer due to lack of facilities and said that improving healthcare services must be the top priority. She also cautioned doctors against neglecting duty, stating that those who prioritize private practice over hospital service could face removal from service. Officials informed her that due to shortage of specialist doctors, postgraduate medical trainees are handling most cases. She directed immediate attention to fill the gaps and improve specialist availability. She also asked for clarity regarding issues in the medicine storage system and stressed that problems should be reported openly for quick solutions.

Complaints about inadequate support from lab technicians and long delays for patients were also discussed. She instructed officials to fix basic issues such as availability of fans, construction of toilets, and rest rooms for women, especially in view of the summer season. She also suggested improved security arrangements, including police deployment during night hours.

The MP stressed that cleanliness, safety, and timely treatment must be ensured as the hospital handles a large number of patients daily.

Separately, she highlighted awareness about the HPV vaccine, which protects against cervical cancer. She said girls aged 9 to 14 can receive the vaccine free at government health centres. A total of 3,570 girls have already been vaccinated in Davanagere district. She urged more families to take advantage of the programme for a healthier future.

Writers and activists warn pollution health crisis

KOPPAL

Senior writer Veerabhadrappa and other speakers expressed serious concern over industrial pollution in Koppal district during a public meeting held to discuss the situation in affected villages like Hirebagana and Halavarthi They said that many families in these areas are facing health issues and loss of livelihood due to factory waste and contaminated water Villagers described a lack of trust in authorities as their conditions continue to worsen without proper action

Speakers pointed out that doctors have advised people not to stay in heavily polluted zones yet residents have no option to relocate.

They questioned the role of the government in allowing such industries to operate without strict environmental control measures Writer Sharada Gopal spoke emotionally about serious health problems affecting children in the region including birth defects heart conditions and reproductive health issues She said that even young children are suffering from serious illnesses which families find difficult to understand or treat She added that many women are facing fertility challenges and the community is worried about the future generation

Experts including retired professors and social leaders supported the concerns and called for urgent government intervention to restore safe living conditions They emphasized the need for strict pollution control laws regular monitoring and accountability for industries affecting rural areas

Participants visited nearby villages and observed the conditions of affected families reporting that water and soil pollution has become a major concern.

MLA pledges balanced rural development in Bidar

SIRSI

MLA Dr. Shailendra Beldale said that balanced development of rural areas is his priority and promised better basic facilities like roads, water, electricity and community buildings.

He was speaking after inaugurating various development works in Sirsi (A) village of Bidar South constituency. He said that village development is the foundation of national progress and every village should be developed into a model village.

He added that his service is focused on people's needs and development works are being taken up step by step based on public demands. According to him, real development means improving people's quality of life, not just constructing buildings.

In the village, he launched several works including ₹30 lakh for Maharshi Valmiki Bhavan, ₹15 lakh for Basaveshwar temple construction, ₹5 lakh for a building near Mauneshwar temple, ₹5 lakh for a house near Revanasiddeshwar temple, ₹5 lakh for fencing at Lingayat cremation ground, and ₹12 lakh for installation of four high mast lights at different locations.

He instructed officials and contractors to complete all works within the deadline and ensure quality without compromise. He said public welfare should remain the top priority in every project.

Neglected Lakes threaten Mangaluru South water security

MANGALURU

Mangaluru South is facing growing concern over neglected lakes and tanks that once supported water needs of the region Plans for restoring these water bodies were announced earlier but progress has remained slow and uneven leaving many sites in poor condition Urban growth waste dumping sewage inflow and silt buildup have damaged several traditional water bodies.

Many lakes that used to hold water throughout the year are now either dry or reduced to shallow pools even during rainy seasons Experts say these lakes were part of a natural system that helped recharge groundwater and support wells and borewells in nearby areas with their decline groundwater levels have fallen and residents are now relying more on external water supply sources Earlier proposals included cleaning desilting repairing embankments and diverting sewage lines away from lakes.

However implementation has not been consistent across all locations slowing overall progress Field reports show continued problems such as encroachments garbage dumping and untreated sewage entering water bodies These issues have further reduced the ability of lakes to store clean water Environmental planners and civic experts stress that restoring these lakes is important for ecology and solving water shortage issues Healthy tanks can store rainwater recharge underground water and reduce flooding during heavy rains.

Local residents are encouraged to protect nearby lakes.

Awareness drives monitoring and strict action against illegal dumping are necessary steps Authorities are urged to create a coordinated revival plan involving civic bodies experts and communities Without urgent action more water bodies may be lost increasing future water stress in the region Restoration efforts require immediate funding and strong coordination among agencies locally implemented.

Mangaluru Airport earns top platinum rating for zero waste to landfill

MANGALURU

Mangaluru International Airport Limited (MgIAL) has secured the prestigious Zero Waste to Landfill Certification from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The airport attained the Platinum – Class I Rating, which represents the highest category available under this programme, after recording a landfill diversion rate exceeding 99 per cent through its comprehensive waste management systems and full compliance with sustainability benchmarks.

The Confederation of Indian Industry carried out a thorough and stringent audit that examined every aspect of the airport's waste segregation, handling, treatment, recycling, and adherence to required protocols. Evaluators specifically praised MgIAL for its consistent and effective application of the 5R principles – Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle – throughout all airport operations. The certification itself was granted by the CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development (CII-CESD) following detailed verification completed during the assessment period.

This recognition reflects Mangaluru International Airport's methodical and results-driven strategy toward sustainability. Waste volumes are kept to a minimum right from the point of origin, while the majority of generated waste is redirected into recycling, reuse and recovery channels, thereby substantially lowering the overall environmental footprint.

By obtaining the Zero Waste to Landfill certification, Mangaluru International Airport has reinforced its standing as a conscientious aviation hub. The milestone brings its operations into closer harmony with both national and international sustainability goals and establishes clear performance standards for waste management excellence across the Indian aviation industry.

Mangaluru International Airport has secured the Platinum – Class I Rating under the Confederation of Indian Industry's Zero Waste to Landfill Certification.

Post-delivery care awareness drive held in Mangaluru

MANGALURU

A workshop titled 'Prasava Raksha' was organised under the joint auspices of the K.N.S.S. Women's Wing and Bunts Alias Nadavara Matru Sangha to raise awareness on women's health and post-delivery care.

The programme was formally inaugurated by lighting the traditional lamp. Dr. Vidya Prabha, Principal of Kanachoor Ayurveda Medical College, Derlakatte, Dr. Ashajyothi Rai, President of Asare Charitable Trust, Savitha R. Shetty, Convener of Mangaluru Taluk Bunts Matru Sangha Women's Wing, Shalini S. Shetty, Convener of Sri Ramakrishna Vidyarthini Bhavan, and Prabha Vijayakumar, President of K.N.S.S. Women's Wing, were present on the occasion.

Speakers stressed the importance of proper care during the post-natal period and discussed the physical and mental challenges faced by women after childbirth.

Dr. Neethu Dev from Kanachoor Medical College delivered a special lecture on post-natal care.

K.N.S.S. President Murali Nair and Secretary Satish also participated in the event.

Prabha Vijayakumar welcomed the gathering, Dr. Sindhu S. compered the programme, and Gopika Rani proposed the vote of thanks.

MLA hands over sewing machines to empower backward class women

MANGALURU

In a bid to promote self-reliance among women from economically weaker sections, BJP MLA of Mangaluru North constituency, Dr. Bharath Shetty Y. distributed sewing machines to 20 selected beneficiaries from poor backward class families in Dakshina Kannada district.

The distribution event took place at the Taluk Panchayat hall under the 2024-25 Sewing Machine Distribution Scheme of the D. Devaraja Arasu Backward Classes Development Corporation.

Dr. Bharath Shetty Y., who chaired the selection committee meeting, personally oversaw the handover of the machines to the eligible women.

The initiative, implemented by the Dakshina Kannada district unit of the corporation, aims to equip the recipients with tools for livelihood generation.

CONSTITUTION AWARENESS EVENT

Ambedkar ideas still guide equality: Experts

HEBBURU

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's thoughts on building an equal society remain highly relevant even today, speakers said at a lecture programme held at Government First Grade College campus, Hebburu.

The event was organised under the "Chakora Lecture Series-16" by Karnataka Sahitya Academy in association with the college, focusing on the topic "Relevance of Ambedkar Thoughts."

Karnataka Sahitya Academy President L.N. Mukundaraj inaugurated the programme and said India, once marked by deep social inequality, has seen transformation due to the Constitution drafted under Ambedkar's leadership. He said students should understand Ambedkar's ideas in the right spirit, work hard, and use education as a path to progress.

He added that his own position as Academy President was possible because of the Constitution, and stressed that education and persistence can help students achieve higher goals in life.

Sahitya Academy member Suma Satish said the Academy is working beyond awards and aims to take meaningful ideas to people at the grassroots level.

She highlighted Ambedkar's strong contribution to women's empowerment and social justice.

Dr. Renuka Prasad B.R., Associate Professor, delivered a special lecture and said Ambedkar's student life continues to inspire generations. He noted that although the Constitution has provided equal rights, true social justice is still not fully achieved, making Ambedkar's ideas relevant even today.

Dr. Nagabhushan Bagnadu, Professor at Tumkur University, warned that without proper education, opportunities in life become limited, urging students to focus on learning.

The programme was presided over by Prof. Dr. Shiva Raju. Faculty members, students, and several dignitaries including Dr. Dinesh Kumar C., Mallika, and Basavaraju participated in the event.

The session began with a welcome address by Dr. Govindaraju N. and was compered by Asst. Prof. Madhusudan K.P.

QUICK READ

Chitradurga to mark Rajkumar birth anniversary event

CHITRADURGA

The 97th birth anniversary of Dr. Rajkumar will be celebrated on April 24 at 10.30 am at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Hall in Chitradurga city. The programme is organised by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and various departments and associations. Minister D. Sudhakar will inaugurate the event, while MLA K.C. Virendra Pappy will preside. Several public representatives and officials will attend as guests. A lecture by Dr. Naveen Maskal and cultural programmes, including songs of Dr. Rajkumar by K. Gangadhar's team, are planned. Officials said the event aims to honour the legendary actor's contribution to Kannada cinema and culture.

Karnataka launches manuscript digitisation drive under mission

MANDYA

The government has launched a major initiative to preserve centuries-old manuscripts through digitisation under the Central Government's Jnana Bharatam Mission. Officials said the programme aims to survey, protect, conserve, translate, and digitally store ancient handwritten texts and records using modern technology so that cultural knowledge is preserved for future generations.

The project will also create a national digital repository accessible through a mobile application developed by the Centre. A state-level committee headed by the Chief Secretary and district-level committees led by Deputy Commissioners have been formed to oversee implementation.

Officials warn of increased heat-related illness risks

Chitradurga

With temperatures rising sharply this summer, health officials have urged people to take extra care, especially for the elderly, pregnant women, and children. District Health and Family Welfare Officer G.P. Renuprasad said the changing weather has increased the risk of heat-related illnesses.During a video conference with medical staff, he stressed the need for proper preparation in hospitals to treat cases of heatstroke and dehydration quickly. Officials were instructed to stay alert and ensure timely medical care for affected patients.District Surveillance Officer Dr. D.M. Abhinava highlighted the importance of coordination among departments and creating awareness among the public to prevent health issues caused by extreme heat.

Mandya farmers oppose industrial land acquisition

Mandya KIADB meeting discussed industrial land acquisition; DC assured farmers of compensation review and right to objections

MANDYA

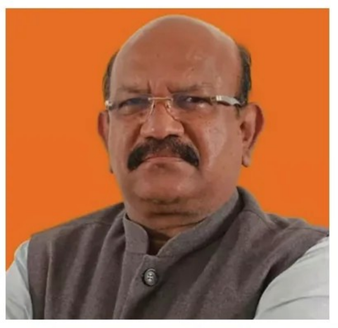
A meeting was held in Mandya to discuss the proposed development of industrial areas in Gejjalagere and Kuduragundi villages of Maddur taluk and Nodekoppalu village of Mandya taluk under the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB). District officials and KIADB representatives met farmers at the Zilla Panchayat hall to hear their views and explain the land acquisition process.District Collector Dr. Kumar said farmers who are not satisfied with the compensation offered for their land can submit requests for higher compensation. He assured that such requests will be forwarded to the government for consideration. He also informed that a preliminary gazette notification has already been issued and that farmers have the legal right to file objections during the acquisition process.Officials explained that the project is being implemented for industrial development in the region and that due procedures will be followed before final decisions are made.

During the meeting, Special Land Acquisition Officer A. N. Raghunandan and Deputy Director of the District Enforcement Department Dinesh were present along with other officials.Farmers strongly expressed their opposition to the acquisition, saying the land is highly fertile and supported by irrigation facilities. They said agriculture is their primary source of livelihood and losing land would directly affect their families' income and survival. Many farmers stated that they are not willing to give up their land under any circumstances.Some farmers added that they would consider giving land only if compensation is offered above the prevailing market rate. Others demanded that government-provided land be made available for rehabilitation if acquisition proceeds.

The meeting concluded with officials noting the concerns raised and assuring that all opinions would be reported to higher authorities for further review.

Umesh Jadhav slams Kharge remarks strongly

KALABURAGI



Dr. Umesh Jadhav condemned alleged Kharge remark on PM Modi, calling it insulting, unconstitutional, and demanding a public apology

Former Lok Sabha member Dr. Umesh Jadhav has strongly condemned a reported statement by AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge, in which he allegedly referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "terrorist" during an election campaign in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Jadhav said the remark is highly objectionable and amounts to an insult to the constitutional office of the Prime Minister. He termed it an anti-constitutional act and demanded that Kharge immediately apologise to the Prime Minister and the people of the country.

In a press statement issued on Wednesday, Jadhav said such comments are not appropriate for a senior political leader of Kharge's stature. He added that responsible leaders should maintain dignity in public discourse, especially during election campaigns.

He also alleged that Congress leaders are making such statements out of frustration following repeated electoral defeats. According to him, the party is reacting to the growing support for the BJP in recent state elections and is resorting to controversial remarks.

Jadhav further stated that the Election Commission has already taken note of the issue and issued a warning, directing Kharge to submit an explanation within 24 hours. He urged that strict action should be taken against such statements to prevent similar incidents in the future.

He appealed that political leaders should avoid language that could create division or disrespect constitutional positions, and instead focus on constructive issues during campaigns.The statement has added to the ongoing political tension between leaders of the two parties, with both sides continuing to exchange sharp criticism over recent public remarks.

CBSE school inaugurated in Pavagada; speakers emphasized quality rural education, teacher role, and improved competitive learning standards

MODERN SCHOOL OPENED TO BOOST RURAL EDUCATION

PAVAGADA

A newly built CBSE-based modern school was inaugurated in Y.N. Hoskote village of Pavagada taluk, with speakers stressing the importance of quality education for rural students.

Speaking at the inauguration, Shivamogga District Judge G.A. Manjunath said teachers are not just educators but "visionaries who guide students towards life." He said good education is still a dream for many rural children and institutions like the new school can help bridge that gap. He added that the school, built with modern facilities, marks an important step in improving local education access and wished success to those involved in its development.MLA H.V. Venkatesh said the education sector is becoming highly competitive, and institutions must focus on delivering strong academic results. He noted that better schools attract more students and help improve learning outcomes. He also said he has always supported the establishment of educational institutions along with his political work.Former minister Venkataramanappa praised the infrastructure of the school, saying such a facility would normally be expected at district level. He urged the management to focus not only on buildings but also on maintaining quality teaching, while also suggesting flexibility in fee structure.Weaver community leaders highlighted that the institution has been established by members of the weaving community for the benefit of rural students. They said the aim is to stop the migration of students to cities by offering quality education locally.Former MLA K.M. Thimmarayappa said building an educational institution is a challenging task and stressed the importance of good teachers and academic results for long-term success.

The school management said the goal is to provide modern education in rural areas so that students need not move to cities for better opportunities.

The event saw participation from several community leaders, legal professionals, and education representatives.

Student body demands basic facilities in Hunsur College

HUNSUR

The Bharat Vidyarthi Federation, Hunsur Taluk Committee, submitted a petition to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a programme held at Kanaka Bhavan, urging urgent improvement of basic facilities at Sri D. Devaraj Arasu College in Hunsur and the establishment of new professional colleges in the region.Taluk President Jeevan Kumar told reporters that student enrollment in the college has been declining sharply over the years due to lack of basic infrastructure. He said the number of students, which was earlier around 6,000, has now dropped to nearly 1,500.

The federation pointed out that a girls' hostel built near the college at a cost of ₹80 lakh has not been put to use yet. They demanded that the hostel be made functional from the upcoming academic year. They also urged authorities to start the long-pending college canteen.Students are facing severe difficulties due to inadequate sanitation facilities, with only four toilets available on campus.

Mourya concepts opens Hubballi office with global tie-up

HUBBALLI

Real estate advisory and property valuation firm Mourya Concepts has officially entered North Karnataka by opening a new office in Hubballi in partnership with global brand Coldwell Banker. The office is located on Gokul Road and marks the company's expansion into the region often called "Chhota Mumbai".

The launch event was attended by former Chief Ministers Jagadish Shettar and Basavaraja Bommai, along with Pramod Muthalik, business leaders, and members of the local industry community.

Company Director K V Venugopal said the firm aims to improve the real estate sector in North Karnataka by offering professional services in property valuation, brokerage, and investment advisory. He said the company brings more than two decades of experience in the field.

He also noted that the tie-up with Coldwell Banker will help customers access global standards, better practices, and a wider professional network in real estate services.

Officials said the new office is expected to improve transparency and trust in property dealings while supporting Hubballi's growth as an emerging investment hub in the region.

Tehsildar praises Bhagiratha's perseverance and dedication

CHIKKABALLAPURA

Bhagiratha Jayanti was observed under the joint arrangement of the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Kannada and Culture Department, where officials paid floral tributes to the portrait of Maharshi Bhagiratha and highlighted his ideals.

Tehsildar Rashmi, speaking on the occasion, described Maharshi Bhagiratha as an extraordinary personality who achieved great goals through steady and determined effort. She said his life is a strong example of perseverance and dedication for society.

She explained that Bhagiratha's effort to bring the sacred Ganga to earth for the welfare of his ancestors is a symbol of service to humanity. She said his continuous struggle to achieve a noble goal makes him a role model for all generations.

Rashmi added that people should not give up on their goals even if they face repeated failures. Instead, they should remain focused and continue their efforts until success is achieved. She said this mindset is the true meaning of "Bhagiratha effort," a phrase widely used to describe difficult but determined work.She also said that Bhagiratha's story shows how determination and patience can achieve even the impossible, and such values should be followed in daily life.

Resource person V. Ajjappa, Executive Joint Director of the Land Survey Department, spoke about the mythological background of Bhagiratha. He said Bhagiratha, born in the Ikshvaku dynasty, performed penance to please Lord Shiva, after which the Ganga descended from the heavens. He explained that Bhagiratha's efforts were aimed at purifying the souls of his ancestors and helping them attain salvation.He encouraged students to focus on education and make consistent efforts to achieve success, calling it the true "Bhagiratha effort" in modern life.

SSLC results improve sharply, rank drops

CHIKKABALLAPURA

The SSLC results in Chikkaballapura district have shown a major improvement this year, rising from 63.2% last year to 90.82% in 2026. However, despite the strong performance, the district's ranking has slipped, officials said.District Collector G. Prabhu said that while the improvement of nearly 27% is encouraging, the district must also work towards securing a better position in the state ranking list. He congratulated students for their performance and said their efforts have brought pride to the district.He noted that several academic support measures were implemented during the 2025–26 academic year. These included special attention to underperforming schools, adoption of schools by district-level officers, regular meetings with parents, and distribution of learning materials. Teachers were also given special training, and additional classes were conducted for students who needed academic support. The education department worked on multiple strategies to improve overall results.Despite these efforts leading to higher pass percentages, the district failed to achieve a top ranking. The Collector said stricter and more focused measures will be introduced in the coming year to improve both results and ranking at the state level.Officials expressed confidence that with continued monitoring and support, the district will achieve better academic performance in the next academic cycle.

DEVOTIONAL CULTURAL EVENT

Bhagirath Jayanti celebrated with devotion and message

CHITRADURGA

The birth anniversary of Maharshi Bhagirath was celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm in Chitradurga, highlighting his contributions to humanity. Speaking at the event, retired DySP S. Nagaraja said Bhagirath's efforts to bring the holy Ganga to earth benefited the entire human race and continue to inspire generations.The program was organized at Maharshi Valmiki Bhavan under the joint auspices of the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department and the city municipality. Nagaraja described Bhagirath as not just a king but a symbol of determination and sacrifice, who performed severe penance for the welfare of his ancestors.Speakers at the event emphasized that Bhagirath's life teaches perseverance and dedication. Sub-Divisional Officer Dr. K. J. Kantaraju said Bhagirath's achievements are not limited to any one community and serve as inspiration for all. He urged students to adopt focus and commitment in their studies.Tehsildar Govindaraju highlighted the importance of education for the progress of society and urged parents to prioritize learning for their children. Other speakers noted that the Uppara community should make use of government schemes to achieve financial and social growth.

A grand procession marked the celebrations, where women carried Purna Kumbha and folk troupes performed traditional music and dance. The procession passed through major parts of the city before reaching the venue.Cultural programs, including singing and performances, added color to the event. Several officials, community leaders and members of the public participated in the celebrations, making it a meaningful occasion that combined cultural pride with social awareness and unity.

QUICK READ

Chitradurga to mark Rajkumar birth anniversary event

CHITRADURGA

The 97th birth anniversary of Dr. Rajkumar will be celebrated on April 24 at 10.30 am at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Hall in Chitradurga city. The programme is organised by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and various departments and associations. Minister D. Sudhakar will inaugurate the event, while MLA K.C. Virendra Pappy will preside. Several public representatives and officials will attend as guests. A lecture by Dr. Naveen Maskal and cultural programmes, including songs of Dr. Rajkumar by K. Gangadhar's team, are planned. Officials said the event aims to honour the legendary actor's contribution to Kannada cinema and culture.

Karnataka launches manuscript digitisation drive under mission

MANDYA

The government has launched a major initiative to preserve centuries-old manuscripts through digitisation under the Central Government's Jnana Bharatam Mission. Officials said the programme aims to survey, protect, conserve, translate, and digitally store ancient handwritten texts and records using modern technology so that cultural knowledge is preserved for future generations.

The project will also create a national digital repository accessible through a mobile application developed by the Centre. A state-level committee headed by the Chief Secretary and district-level committees led by Deputy Commissioners have been formed to oversee implementation.

Officials warn of increased heat-related illness risks

Chitradurga

With temperatures rising sharply this summer, health officials have urged people to take extra care, especially for the elderly, pregnant women, and children. District Health and Family Welfare Officer G.P. Renuprasad said the changing weather has increased the risk of heat-related illnesses.During a video conference with medical staff, he stressed the need for proper preparation in hospitals to treat cases of heatstroke and dehydration quickly. Officials were instructed to stay alert and ensure timely medical care for affected patients.District Surveillance Officer Dr. D.M. Abhinava highlighted the importance of coordination among departments and creating awareness among the public to prevent health issues caused by extreme heat.

Mandya farmers oppose industrial land acquisition

Mandya KIADB meeting discussed industrial land acquisition; DC assured farmers of compensation review and right to objections

MANDYA

A meeting was held in Mandya to discuss the proposed development of industrial areas in Gejjalagere and Kuduragundi villages of Maddur taluk and Nodekoppalu village of Mandya taluk under the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB). District officials and KIADB representatives met farmers at the Zilla Panchayat hall to hear their views and explain the land acquisition process.District Collector Dr. Kumar said farmers who are not satisfied with the compensation offered for their land can submit requests for higher compensation. He assured that such requests will be forwarded to the government for consideration. He also informed that a preliminary gazette notification has already been issued and that farmers have the legal right to file objections during the acquisition process.Officials explained that the project is being implemented for industrial development in the region and that due procedures will be followed before final decisions are made.

During the meeting, Special Land Acquisition Officer A. N. Raghunandan and Deputy Director of the District Enforcement Department Dinesh were present along with other officials.Farmers strongly expressed their opposition to the acquisition, saying the land is highly fertile and supported by irrigation facilities. They said agriculture is their primary source of livelihood and losing land would directly affect their families' income and survival. Many farmers stated that they are not willing to give up their land under any circumstances.Some farmers added that they would consider giving land only if compensation is offered above the prevailing market rate. Others demanded that government-provided land be made available for rehabilitation if acquisition proceeds.

The meeting concluded with officials noting the concerns raised and assuring that all opinions would be reported to higher authorities for further review.

Umesh Jadhav slams Kharge remarks strongly

KALABURAGI

Dr. Umesh Jadhav condemned alleged Kharge remark on PM Modi, calling it insulting, unconstitutional, and demanding a public apology

Former Lok Sabha member Dr. Umesh Jadhav has strongly condemned a reported statement by AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge, in which he allegedly referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "terrorist" during an election campaign in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Jadhav said the remark is highly objectionable and amounts to an insult to the constitutional office of the Prime Minister. He termed it an anti-constitutional act and demanded that Kharge immediately apologise to the Prime Minister and the people of the country.

In a press statement issued on Wednesday, Jadhav said such comments are not appropriate for a senior political leader of Kharge's stature. He added that responsible leaders should maintain dignity in public discourse, especially during election campaigns.

He also alleged that Congress leaders are making such statements out of frustration following repeated electoral defeats. According to him, the party is reacting to the growing support for the BJP in recent state elections and is resorting to controversial remarks.

Jadhav further stated that the Election Commission has already taken note of the issue and issued a warning, directing Kharge to submit an explanation within 24 hours. He urged that strict action should be taken against such statements to prevent similar incidents in the future.

He appealed that political leaders should avoid language that could create division or disrespect constitutional positions, and instead focus on constructive issues during campaigns.The statement has added to the ongoing political tension between leaders of the two parties, with both sides continuing to exchange sharp criticism over recent public remarks.

CBSE school inaugurated in Pavagada; speakers emphasized quality rural education, teacher role, and improved competitive learning standards

MODERN SCHOOL OPENED TO BOOST RURAL EDUCATION

PAVAGADA

A newly built CBSE-based modern school was inaugurated in Y.N. Hoskote village of Pavagada taluk, with speakers stressing the importance of quality education for rural students.

Speaking at the inauguration, Shivamogga District Judge G.A. Manjunath said teachers are not just educators but "visionaries who guide students towards life." He said good education is still a dream for many rural children and institutions like the new school can help bridge that gap. He added that the school, built with modern facilities, marks an important step in improving local education access and wished success to those involved in its development.MLA H.V. Venkatesh said the education sector is becoming highly competitive, and institutions must focus on delivering strong academic results. He noted that better schools attract more students and help improve learning outcomes. He also said he has always supported the establishment of educational institutions along with his political work.Former minister Venkataramanappa praised the infrastructure of the school, saying such a facility would normally be expected at district level. He urged the management to focus not only on buildings but also on maintaining quality teaching, while also suggesting flexibility in fee structure.Weaver community leaders highlighted that the institution has been established by members of the weaving community for the benefit of rural students. They said the aim is to stop the migration of students to cities by offering quality education locally.Former MLA K.M. Thimmarayappa said building an educational institution is a challenging task and stressed the importance of good teachers and academic results for long-term success.

The school management said the goal is to provide modern education in rural areas so that students need not move to cities for better opportunities.

The event saw participation from several community leaders, legal professionals, and education representatives.

Student body demands basic facilities in Hunsur College

HUNSUR

The Bharat Vidyarthi Federation, Hunsur Taluk Committee, submitted a petition to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a programme held at Kanaka Bhavan, urging urgent improvement of basic facilities at Sri D. Devaraj Arasu College in Hunsur and the establishment of new professional colleges in the region.Taluk President Jeevan Kumar told reporters that student enrollment in the college has been declining sharply over the years due to lack of basic infrastructure. He said the number of students, which was earlier around 6,000, has now dropped to nearly 1,500.

The federation pointed out that a girls' hostel built near the college at a cost of ₹80 lakh has not been put to use yet. They demanded that the hostel be made functional from the upcoming academic year. They also urged authorities to start the long-pending college canteen.Students are facing severe difficulties due to inadequate sanitation facilities, with only four toilets available on campus.

Mourya concepts opens Hubballi office with global tie-up

HUBBALLI

Real estate advisory and property valuation firm Mourya Concepts has officially entered North Karnataka by opening a new office in Hubballi in partnership with global brand Coldwell Banker. The office is located on Gokul Road and marks the company's expansion into the region often called "Chhota Mumbai".

The launch event was attended by former Chief Ministers Jagadish Shettar and Basavaraja Bommai, along with Pramod Muthalik, business leaders, and members of the local industry community.

Company Director K V Venugopal said the firm aims to improve the real estate sector in North Karnataka by offering professional services in property valuation, brokerage, and investment advisory. He said the company brings more than two decades of experience in the field.

He also noted that the tie-up with Coldwell Banker will help customers access global standards, better practices, and a wider professional network in real estate services.

Officials said the new office is expected to improve transparency and trust in property dealings while supporting Hubballi's growth as an emerging investment hub in the region.

Tehsildar praises Bhagiratha's perseverance and dedication

CHIKKABALLAPURA

Bhagiratha Jayanti was observed under the joint arrangement of the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Kannada and Culture Department, where officials paid floral tributes to the portrait of Maharshi Bhagiratha and highlighted his ideals.

Tehsildar Rashmi, speaking on the occasion, described Maharshi Bhagiratha as an extraordinary personality who achieved great goals through steady and determined effort. She said his life is a strong example of perseverance and dedication for society.

She explained that Bhagiratha's effort to bring the sacred Ganga to earth for the welfare of his ancestors is a symbol of service to humanity. She said his continuous struggle to achieve a noble goal makes him a role model for all generations.

Rashmi added that people should not give up on their goals even if they face repeated failures. Instead, they should remain focused and continue their efforts until success is achieved. She said this mindset is the true meaning of "Bhagiratha effort," a phrase widely used to describe difficult but determined work.She also said that Bhagiratha's story shows how determination and patience can achieve even the impossible, and such values should be followed in daily life.

Resource person V. Ajjappa, Executive Joint Director of the Land Survey Department, spoke about the mythological background of Bhagiratha. He said Bhagiratha, born in the Ikshvaku dynasty, performed penance to please Lord Shiva, after which the Ganga descended from the heavens. He explained that Bhagiratha's efforts were aimed at purifying the souls of his ancestors and helping them attain salvation.He encouraged students to focus on education and make consistent efforts to achieve success, calling it the true "Bhagiratha effort" in modern life.

SSLC results improve sharply, rank drops

CHIKKABALLAPURA

The SSLC results in Chikkaballapura district have shown a major improvement this year, rising from 63.2% last year to 90.82% in 2026. However, despite the strong performance, the district's ranking has slipped, officials said.District Collector G. Prabhu said that while the improvement of nearly 27% is encouraging, the district must also work towards securing a better position in the state ranking list. He congratulated students for their performance and said their efforts have brought pride to the district.He noted that several academic support measures were implemented during the 2025–26 academic year. These included special attention to underperforming schools, adoption of schools by district-level officers, regular meetings with parents, and distribution of learning materials. Teachers were also given special training, and additional classes were conducted for students who needed academic support. The education department worked on multiple strategies to improve overall results.Despite these efforts leading to higher pass percentages, the district failed to achieve a top ranking. The Collector said stricter and more focused measures will be introduced in the coming year to improve both results and ranking at the state level.Officials expressed confidence that with continued monitoring and support, the district will achieve better academic performance in the next academic cycle.

DEVOTIONAL CULTURAL EVENT

Bhagirath Jayanti celebrated with devotion and message

CHITRADURGA

The birth anniversary of Maharshi Bhagirath was celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm in Chitradurga, highlighting his contributions to humanity. Speaking at the event, retired DySP S. Nagaraja said Bhagirath's efforts to bring the holy Ganga to earth benefited the entire human race and continue to inspire generations.The program was organized at Maharshi Valmiki Bhavan under the joint auspices of the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department and the city municipality. Nagaraja described Bhagirath as not just a king but a symbol of determination and sacrifice, who performed severe penance for the welfare of his ancestors.Speakers at the event emphasized that Bhagirath's life teaches perseverance and dedication. Sub-Divisional Officer Dr. K. J. Kantaraju said Bhagirath's achievements are not limited to any one community and serve as inspiration for all. He urged students to adopt focus and commitment in their studies.Tehsildar Govindaraju highlighted the importance of education for the progress of society and urged parents to prioritize learning for their children. Other speakers noted that the Uppara community should make use of government schemes to achieve financial and social growth.

A grand procession marked the celebrations, where women carried Purna Kumbha and folk troupes performed traditional music and dance. The procession passed through major parts of the city before reaching the venue.Cultural programs, including singing and performances, added color to the event. Several officials, community leaders and members of the public participated in the celebrations, making it a meaningful occasion that combined cultural pride with social awareness and unity.

HHRC orders probe into student suicides at NIT-K

The Commission has expressed alarm over a series of suicides and attempts occurring within a short period on campus

CHANDIGARH

The Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) has initiated a detailed inquiry into multiple suicide incidents reported at National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra, raising serious concerns over student safety and mental health support systems.

Taking suo motu cognizance based on media reports and preliminary findings, the commission has expressed alarm over a series of suicides and attempts occurring within a short period on campus. The incidents have prompted questions regarding institutional accountability and the adequacy of mental health infrastructure available to students.

According to reports, a first-year student recently attempted suicide by jumping from the fifth floor of a hostel building. The student was rescued in time and hospitalized. Earlier, on April 16, a second-year student was found dead in his hostel room, sparking protests among fellow students who alleged delays in the administration's response.

The situation appears to be part of a troubling pattern, with at least two other student deaths reported in February and March, followed by another incident on April 8. The recurrence of such cases has intensified scrutiny of the institute's handling of student welfare.

The commission, led by Chairperson Lalit Batra and members Kuldip Jain and Deep Bhatia, noted that actions taken by the institute so

far appeared limited. Measures reportedly included the transfer of two professors, which the commission suggested was insufficient given the gravity of the situation.

The most recent suicide attempt on April 18 has further underscored concerns that existing interventions are neither adequate nor effective. The commission observed that the incidents may point to gaps in counselling services, mental health support systems, monitoring mechanisms, and crisis response protocols within the institution.

Highlighting the broader responsibility of educational institutions, the commission stated that their role extends beyond academics to safeguarding the physical and mental well-being of students. It noted that the recurrence of such incidents raises serious concerns under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees the right to life, dignity, and mental well-being.

The inquiry is expected to examine systemic shortcomings and recommend measures to prevent further incidents, as authorities face growing pressure to ensure a safer and more supportive campus environment.

BJP rule rooted in zero tolerance stance on terrorism

BANASKANTHA

He claimed that earlier administrations relied largely on statements, whereas the current approach focuses on decisive action

Jagdish Vishwakarma on Thursday emphasized the resilience of party workers and criticized opposition parties while addressing a public gathering in Palanpur ahead of upcoming local body elections.

Speaking at a Vikas Sankalp Sabha, Vishwakarma referred to incidents of political violence in West Bengal and Kerala, alleging that workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party had faced severe attacks, including killings, in those regions.

Despite such challenges, he said party members remained committed to strengthening the organization and continuing their engagement with the public.

He stated that BJP workers maintain year-round contact with citizens and actively participate in public service, contrasting this with opposition leaders whom he claimed are visible only during election periods. Targeting the Indian National Congress, Vishwakarma alleged that the party has lost public trust due to a lack of clear policies, leadership, and intent.

The Gujarat BJP chief also highlighted welfare initiatives undertaken by both the central and state governments. He pointed to relief measures for farmers affected by unseasonal rains, including a ₹10,000 crore assistance package and procurement of crops worth ₹15,000 crore at minimum support prices. According to him, these funds have been directly transferred to farmers' bank accounts under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

On national security, Vishwakarma said there has been a significant shift in the government's response to terrorism under BJP leadership. He claimed that earlier administrations relied largely on statements, whereas the current approach focuses on decisive action. Referring to measures such as surgical and air strikes, he reiterated that a zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism remains central to the BJP's governance approach.

The event forms part of the party's campaign efforts as it seeks to consolidate support ahead of local elections in Gujarat, with leaders highlighting governance achievements and organizational strength to appeal to voters.

Chowdhury alleges EVM glitch during Bengal polling

MURSHIDABAD

Amid the first phase of Assembly elections in West Bengal, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Thursday alleged repeated malfunctioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) at a polling booth in Berhampore, causing long delays for voters.

Chowdhury, who is contesting from the Berhampore constituency, told reporters that the issue had been ongoing since early morning at booth number 141. According to him, despite multiple complaints, the problem persisted even after the machines were replaced. He said the malfunction had forced voters to wait for hours under intense heat, leading to frustration and inconvenience.

I have been receiving complaints since morning about repeated EVM failures. Although replacements were made, the situation has not improved, he said. He further stated that he had formally lodged complaints with election authorities, including the Chief Electoral Officer, and had also approached the District Magistrate for intervention.

Chowdhury added that while officials had assured corrective action and promised to send technical teams, effective resolution had not been achieved at the time of his visit. He said he was compelled to personally inspect the polling station due to the lack of progress.

The Congress leader highlighted the hardships faced by voters, especially women, who continued to stand in long queues despite the extreme weather conditions. He noted the absence of basic arrangements such as shade or seating, which added to the difficulties for those waiting to cast their votes.

People are standing for hours in the heat, and many are returning home without voting. Women, in particular, are enduring tough conditions but are determined to vote due to concerns about future rights, he said.

A woman voter at the polling station echoed these concerns, stating that she had been waiting for nearly two hours without any clarity on when the voting process would resume smoothly. She described the situation as frustrating and disorganized, citing repeated announcements about machine malfunctions.

The incident has raised concerns about polling arrangements and the smooth conduct of elections in the constituency, as authorities work to address the technical issues and ensure that all voters are able to exercise their franchise.

The court grants interim relief to Bose, allowing him to defer his appearance before the ED until the ongoing Assembly polls

HC grants relief to Sujit Bose from ED summons

KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday granted interim relief to Sujit Bose, allowing him to defer his appearance before the Enforcement Directorate until after the ongoing Assembly elections.

The court's decision came while hearing a petition filed by Bose, who had sought more time to respond to multiple summons issued by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a municipal recruitment corruption case. Justice Krishna Rao ruled that Bose would not be required to appear before the agency immediately and can present himself only after the election process concludes, with a specified date of May 1.

Over the past few days, the central agency had summoned Bose several times for questioning. However, the minister cited his involvement in election campaigning and requested extensions through written communication. He subsequently approached the High Court seeking relief from immediate appearance.

Bose, a three-time MLA from the Trinamool Congress, is contesting the Assembly elections from the Bidhannagar constituency, aiming for re-election. Another minister, Rathin Ghosh, who is also under investigation in the same case, has been contesting from the Madhyamgram constituency. Both constituencies are scheduled to vote in the second phase of polling on April 29.

The Enforcement Directorate has been actively investigating the alleged irregularities in municipal recruitment. In October 2023, Ghosh was questioned by the agency, and his residence was searched as part of the probe. Similarly, Bose has been under scrutiny, with raids conducted at his office and residence in January 2024 and again in October 2025. The agency also searched premises linked to some of his close associates.

The High Court's order provides temporary relief to Bose during a crucial phase of the election campaign while ensuring that the investigation proceeds after the polls. The case continues to draw political attention, given its timing and the involvement of key leaders ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal.

Delhi L-G highlights role of holistic education

NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor T. S. Sandhu on Thursday attended the 100th Annual Day celebrations of Shri Ram College of Commerce, stressing that education must go beyond academics to nurture character, creativity, and critical thinking.

Addressing students, faculty, and alumni, Sandhu said the strength of any institution lies in its people. He praised the faculty for maintaining high academic standards and emphasized the need to prepare students to think independently, adapt to change, and act with integrity. Highlighting practical learning, he noted that disciplines like commerce and economics require strong links between theory and real-world application, especially in a rapidly evolving global environment. He pointed to emerging fields such as digital finance, entrepreneurship, and data analytics as key opportunities for youth, while also stressing the importance of ethical grounding. Referring to India's growth trajectory, Sandhu, quoting Narendra Modi, said education should promote both excellence and character.

Government of Karnataka
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT ENGINEERING DIVISION KALABURAG

No: HFW/EE/DIVN/KLB/AE-2/PMC & DPR/2026-27/ 134 Date:-23.04.2026.

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Executive Engineer, H&FWD, Engineering Division, Kalaburagi invites tender in Two Cover Document system for , Architectural, Structural, Electrical, Sanitation and Other Services works, 03 (1 call 2)packages and appointment of project management consultants works in 02 (call 2 packages), electronic procurement platform Tenders are invited through (kppp portal) in Two Cover Document system. The minimum Estimated amount of Rs. 06.00 lakhs and the maximum amount is Rs. 90.00 lakhs. For more details, please visit the KPP portal.**(Refer kpp-portal for the details).**

Calendar of Events: 1. Last date for receipt of tenders: 08-05-2026 upto 16:00 hrs. 2. Date of Opening of Tenders (Technical Bids) :11-05-2026 at 11;00 hrs.

The tender details can be downloaded from the kppp portal platform (www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in). Tenders shall be submitted electronically at (www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in) and EMD and tender processing fee shall also be paid electronically. Interested contractors will need to register on the e-procurement platform to participate in this tender.

Please note henceforth any changes in the schedule will not be published through news papers& further changes will be updated only in - kppp portal.

NOTE: 1. All the rights are reserved by the under signed for postponement or cancellation of entire tender process, rejection of bids /individual bid etc., without assigning any reason. 2. Henceforth, any changes in the schedule/contents will not be published through news papers and further changes will be updated only on e-procurement portal.

Sd/-Executive Engineer
H & FWD Engineering Division, Kalaburagi

DIPR/Kalaburagi/65/KSMC&A/2026-27

Government of Karnataka
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEERING DIVISION, KALABURAGI

No : EE/PRED/KLB/KKRDB /TS2/TND/2025-26/ 176 Date : 18/04/2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through E-Procurement Two Cover System)

1) Name of work : 1. Supplying of Dual Desk and Benches to various Govt. High School in Aland Taluka under KKRDB for the year 2025-26 Indent No.RDPR/2026-27/IND14050, 2. Providing of Digital Library furniture and outdoor Sports Equipments to Govt. First Grade Degree College Kalgi Town in Kalgi Taluka under KKRDB for the year 2024-25 Indent No.RDPR/2025-26/IND13954, 2) Head of account KKRDB, 3) Amount put to tender **Indent No.13954 Rs.55,93,726.14, Indent No.14050: Rs.81,54,000.00,** 4) Class of Contractor Manufacture/Authorised Dealer/Suppliers/Contractor, 5) Issue of Blank Tender Documents **18.04.2026 to 27.04.2026 upto 4.00 pm ,** 6) Tender Form Fee As per KPPP Norms, 7) E.M.D. Fee **: Indent No.13954 : Rs.1,12,000.00, Indent No.14050 : 1,63,500.00,** 8) Receipt of completed tender documents: **18.04.2026 to 27.04.2026 upto 4.00 pm** 9) Technical Bid Opening Date: **28.04.2026 After 4.00 pm,** 10) Financial Bid opening Date: **29.04.2026 After 11.00 am,** 11) For more details contact Office of the Executive Engineer, Panchayat Raj Engineering Division Opp: Karnataka Grameen Bank (PKGB) Head office, Kusnoor Road, Rajapur, Kalaburagi, 12) Website Address: www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in

DIPR/Kalaburagi/71/
Deshpande Publicity/2026-27

Sd/- **Executive Engineer,**
Panchayat Raj Engineering Division, Kalaburagi

HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA
Bengaluru-560001

No. HCRB 8/2025 (GROUP-D - RPC)
HCRB 9/2025 (GROUP - D - KKR) **Date: 22.04.2026**

BRIEF NOTIFICATION

Online applications are invited by High Court of Karnataka for filling up of 101 [93 posts under Residual Parent Cadre including 01 backlog post and 08 posts under Kalyana Karnataka Region] various cadres of Group D posts [i.e., Peons, Watchman, Sweepers, Peons (House Keeping), Lift Attender, Assistant Binder, Tailor and Dhobi].

Pay scale for the cadres of Peon, Watchman, Sweeper, Peon (House Keeping), Assistant Binder and Dhobi is Rs.19,900/-Rs.63,200/- and for the cadres of Lift Attender and Tailor is Rs. 21,700/-Rs.69,100/-.

The last date for submission of online application is **21st May, 2026 till 11.59 p.m.**

Eligible candidates are required to apply only through 'Online' by visiting the official website of High Court of Karnataka at **judiciary.karnataka.gov.in.** No other means / mode of applications will be accepted. The Notification and other details are available in the above mentioned portal and in the official Gazette (E-Gazette) of Karnataka dated **22.04.2026**.

Sd/- (K.S. BHARATH KUMAR)
REGISTRAR GENERAL ,
HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA, BENGALURU.

DIPR/CP/318/NR/2026-27

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Office of the Secretary to Government, Department of Women and Child Development and Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens
1st Floor, M.S.Building, Bengaluru - 560001.

No: DWCD/2026-27/SE0751 **Date:23-04-2026**

Short-term tender notice for provision of Human Resource Services through Outsourcing Agency for Women Helpline 181 for the year 2026-27
(Only through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal)

For the year 2026-27, a notification has been issued by the Department of Women and Child Development to recruit 22 staff members for Women helpline 181 unit through outsource manpower resource agency for a period of 11 months. (Website : https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in) Tenderers shall submit tender through e-portal. In this regard, the tenderer should have the qualification and experience specified in the tender.

1. Tender document available through online Date: **23.04.2026, Time (IST): 16.00**
2. Last date for receipt of Tender date: **07.05.2026, Time (IST): 17.30.**
3. Opening of Technical bid date: **12.05.2026, Time (IST): 13.00.**
4. Opening of Financical bid date: **13.05.2026, Time (IST): 11.00**

Copies of Tender announcement and Tender Document are available from a tender inviting authority Joint Director (PDM), Department of Women and Child Development, Bengaluru. Further details may be obtained from the office of the Joint Director (PDM) Directorate of Women and Child Development, PWD Building Premises, Ananda Rao Circle, Bangalore (Tel No. 080-22353833) during office hours.

Sd/-
Deputy Secretary to the Government and State Tender Bulletin Officer, Dept. of Women and Child Development and Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens.

DIPR/CP/321/Zen/2026-27

Govt of Karnataka
O/O EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
PWD, Udupi Division Udupi - 576101.
C.No: (0820) 2531802

No.PWD:UDN:NIT-02:2026-27:AE-2 Dated: 22.04.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

It is here by notified for the information of intending eligible registered contractor in Karnataka PWD, through e-portal "kppp.karnataka.gov.in" as per Karnataka tranperency in public procurement act - 2023, as per specified terms & condition notified there in. The Last date for submission of tender on **22.05.2026** through E-procurement portal "kppp.karnataka.gov.in" under 5054-04-337-0-01-154 head, 1work costing **Rs. 222.16 Lakhs (excluding GST)** for Major Road Improvements. For more information contact office during office hours.

Executive Engineer,
Public works department
Udupi Division Udupi.

Executive Engineer
Public Works Department,
No. 1, Buildings Division, SJP Campus, Bengaluru
Ph: 080-22255210

No.: EE/Bld.1/AE-3/2026-27/05 Date: 21.04.2026

Invitation for Tender (IFT)

The above Department invites Tenders through e-procurement portal of GoK **(http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** from eligible Tenderers for Carrying out of civil and other works required for setting up of Digital Studio, providing PMC (Project Management Consultancy) services, providing painting , polish for doors and windows, fixing UPVC windows, renovation of kitchen, repairs to toilet, fixing of new wardrobe and other development works, total of 04 works at various notified places. Approx. value of work: **Min. Rs. 2.39 lakhs, Max. Rs. 6.52 lakhs.** EMD: **Min. Rs. 6,000/-, Max. Rs. 16,400/-.** Cost of Document: As in e-portal. Period of Completion for each work: **from 2 Months to 9 Months (including rainy season).** Last date for downloading Tender through e-procurement portal and submission through online: For Sl. No. 1: **06.05.2026 up to 4.30 PM** & For Sl. No. 2, 3 & 4: **29.04.2026 up to 4.30 PM.** Date of opening the Tender: as per e-procurement guidelines. Further information, brief details of the works, approx. amount, EMD and mode of payment, Reservation, etc. can be obtained from the above office or from e-procurement portal **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer
DIPR/DD-C.P/308/KSMCA/2026-27

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

Modi announces 10-point guarantee for Bengal women

He asserted that those who opposed measures aimed at empowering women would face consequences in the ongoing elections

KOLKATA

The announcement comes as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign strategy to strengthen its outreach among women voters in the state.

Speaking at a public gathering in Krishnanagar, the Prime Minister sharply criticized the Trinamool Congress and the INDIA bloc, accusing them of obstructing the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament.

He asserted that those who opposed measures aimed at empowering women would face consequences in the ongoing elections.

Highlighting the importance of women's safety and economic independence, Modi said that the proposed guarantees would be implemented on the ground if the Bharatiya Janata Party forms the government in West Bengal. He emphasized strict action against crimes targeting women, stating that perpetrators would be punished without delay. As part of strengthening law enforcement, he promised the establishment of women's police stations in every block and increased recruitment of women into the police force.

The Prime Minister also announced direct financial assistance initiatives, including an annual transfer of Rs 36,000 to women's bank accounts. In addition, financial support of Rs 50,000 would be provided to girls pursuing graduation, while pregnant women would receive Rs 21,000. To ensure better nutrition for children, an additional Rs 36,000 support package was also proposed.

Further outlining welfare measures, Modi said that schemes such as the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana would be strengthened to secure the future of daughters. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, women would be eligible for loans of up to Rs 20 lakh to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. He added that large numbers of women would be encouraged to become financially independent under the Lakhpati Didi initiative.

The Prime Minister also highlighted healthcare and housing benefits, stating that under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, women would receive free medical treatment up to Rs 5 lakh. Additionally, houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana would be registered in the name of women to ensure financial security and ownership rights.

Raj Guv flags concern over abandoned stray bulls

Public-govt joint intervention essential to ensure proper care and protection of these animals

JAIPUR

Highlighting the seriousness of the situation, the Governor stressed that abandoned bulls pose challenges not only to urban and rural management but also to animal welfare. He pointed out that coordinated efforts, including community participation and government intervention, are essential to ensure proper care and protection of these animals.

Bagade emphasized initiatives such as fodder donation drives and the use of cow shelters to provide safe refuge for abandoned bulls. He noted that the Government of Rajasthan has already been running special campaigns focused on their protection and welfare. In addition, he mentioned a dedicated scheme that encourages farmers to rear bulls and utilize them in agricultural activities. Under this initiative, eligible farmers receive annual financial assistance of Rs 30,000, which aims to promote sustainable livestock management.

During his visit to Bijorawas village, the Governor attended the consecration ceremony of a Shiv Temple located within the Baba Bishah Temple complex. On the occasion, he performed traditional rituals and prayers, seeking peace, prosperity, and well-being for the people of the state.

Addressing the gathering, Bagade spoke about the spiritual significance of Lord Shiva, describing him as a symbol of knowledge and positivity who dispels ignorance and negativity. He emphasized the importance of preserving cultural traditions and passing them on to future generations.

The Governor highlighted the need for young people to remain deeply connected to their heritage and values, stating that cultural continuity plays a crucial role in building a strong society. He added that while modern education is important, it should be complemented with a deep understanding of cultural roots and ethical values.

Reiterating his message, Bagade urged communities to actively participate in both cultural preservation and social responsibility initiatives, including the care and protection of abandoned animals.

QUICK READ

Our alliance will do well in Tamil Nadu: Congress MP

Karaikudi

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram on Thursday expressed confidence that the Secular Progressive Alliance (DMK-led alliance) will perform strongly in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections as he cast his vote in Sivaganga. He arrived in Karaikudi in Sivaganga to exercise his franchise along with his wife, Srinidhi, and daughter, Aditi. After casting his vote, Chidambaram said, I am very, very confident that the alliance will do very well. I am particularly confident about my parliamentary constituency (Sivaganga). And I am also confident that K. R. Periyakaruppan, who is our candidate in the Tiruppattur Assembly, will get re-elected with a very handsome margin.

'West Asia conflict blight on humanity with no winners'

New Delhi

South African High Commissioner to India, Anil Sooklal, has urged the international community to encourage parties involved in the West Asia conflict to remain engaged and find peace for the good of humanity. Sooklal said that war in West Asia is having a very negative impact on the world, especially in terms of energy security. He reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that now is not the time for war. He expressed optimism that a positive outcome is quite possible if the peace talks are held between the United States and Iran. We have to remain optimistic because that's the need of the hour. The war, if it continues, is going to have a devastating effect on all of us. It's already had a very negative impact, especially in terms of energy security, but it also impacts on all other sectors of our lives.

INDIA-QATAR PLANS TO DEEPEN TRADE, INVESTMENT TIES

NEW DELHI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday held a virtual meeting with Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Sayed to explore ways to strengthen bilateral trade and investment ties in the backdrop of rising geopolitical uncertainties.

During the high-level interaction, both sides focused on expanding economic cooperation and building resilient supply chains to navigate the challenges of an evolving global trade landscape. The discussions highlighted the importance of collaboration between India and Qatar in ensuring stable and sustainable trade partnerships.

Goyal stated that the meeting centered on deepening trade engagement and enhancing investment opportunities between the two countries. He emphasized the need to strengthen supply chain resilience, especially at a time when global disruptions continue to impact trade flows. Expressing optimism about future prospects, the minister said he looked forward to further strengthening the strategic partnership with Qatar in the coming years.

The talks come as India continues to actively engage with key global partners to expand its economic footprint. Earlier this month, India also held discussions with Oman regarding the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Goyal had spoken with Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Anwar bin Hilal bin Hamdoun Al Jabri, to explore avenues for boosting bilateral trade and investment under the agreement.

Separately, the minister revealed that progress is being made on the proposed India-United States bilateral trade agreement. He noted that the first tranche of the agreement is close to finalisation, with a team of Indian officials currently in Washington engaged in negotiations. The aim is to secure

preferential market access for Indian goods in the US compared to competing countries.

Trade discussions between India and the United States have recently been impacted by developments in the US legal system, including the Supreme Court's decision to strike down sweeping reciprocal tariff measures introduced during the tenure of former President Donald Trump. As a result, meetings between chief trade negotiators of the two countries have been rescheduled.

Officials believe that continued dialogue with key international partners such as Qatar, Oman, and the United States will play a crucial role in strengthening India's global trade position and ensuring long-term economic growth.

NCB strengthens inter-agency collab to combat drug trafficking

AHMEDABAD

The meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) for Gujarat was chaired by NCB Deputy Director General (Western Region) Maneesh Kumar, bringing together officials from several major agencies.

Representatives from the Border Security Force, Indian Coast Guard, National Investigation Agency, Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs, Income Tax Department, Railway Protection Force, Gujarat Anti-Narcotics Task Force, and the Food and Drugs Control Administration participated in the discussions.

According to officials, the meeting emphasized the importance of comprehensive investigations into drug-related cases. This includes financial tracking, identification of terror links, and dismantling large trafficking syndicates. A total of 50 priority cases have been identified by the Gujarat Anti-Narcotics Task Force for focused monitoring and coordinated action.

Authorities stressed the need for stronger inter-agency collaboration through real-time intelligence sharing, regular data exchange, and joint interrogation in inter-state cases. Advanced tools such as the Financial Intelligence Unit and NATGRID are also being utilized to track key accused individuals, repeat offenders, and organized networks involved in drug trafficking.

The NCB, in a statement shared on X, highlighted that the quarterly state-level JCC meeting in Ahmedabad was aimed at strengthening coordination among drug law enforcement agencies to effectively address emerging narcotics challenges.

The development comes shortly after Amit Shah commended the NCB for securing convictions against 73 drug offenders during the first quarter of 2026. He stated that the government is committed to dismantling drug cartels and ensuring strict legal action to protect the youth from the dangers of narcotics.

Between January and March 2026, the NCB achieved convictions in 35 cases. Among those convicted, four individuals received the maximum sentence of 20 years, while 54 others were awarded sentences of 10 years or more. Additionally, fines totaling Rs 1.22 crore were imposed.

Officials reiterated that continued coordination and intelligence-driven operations remain crucial in the fight against drug trafficking, as agencies work together to curb the growing threat and safeguard society.

SC slams Chhattisgarh police over order violation

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has taken strong exception to the failure of the Chhattisgarh authorities to ensure the presence of a respondent despite a clear direction, and summoned the Superintendent of Police, Korba, to appear in person with a show-cause explanation.

A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and R. Mahadevan expressed displeasure over a blatant and deliberate violation of its order after being informed that respondent No. 2 – Chandra Kumar Jaiswal @ Buttu — was not present in the top court despite a clear direction requiring his appearance on April 20.

We take strong exception to such conduct of the State of Chhattisgarh, the Justice Amanullah-led Bench observed, adding that the direction to ensure the respondent's presence had been unequivocal.

The apex court was hearing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by Chatt Kunwar Sarthi challenging the August 28, 2024, judgment of the Chhattisgarh High Court, which set aside the conviction of Jaiswal, alias Butu, in a rape case and acquitted him of all charges.

Recounting the sequence of events, the bench recorded that on March 23, the matter was directed to be listed on April 15 with instructions to the state government to produce respondent no. 2. Although the respondent was reportedly brought to the top court premises on April 15, the matter could not be taken up due to the Constitution Bench sitting.

The bench had, thereafter, made it clear that the respondent must remain present on the next date.

Today, we are informed that the respondent no.2 is not present in Court, the apex recorded in its order passed on April 20.

Taking a serious view of the lapse, the Supreme Court said the Superintendent of Police, Korba, would have to explain the circumstances leading to non-compliance.

We find that the Superintendent of Police, Korba, is required to show cause as to why the court may not pass appropriate orders against him for such blatant and deliberate violation of the direction of this Court, the order said.

The Justice Amanullah-led Bench directed the Superintendent of Police, Korba, to remain personally present before the top court on April 24 at 10:30 a.m. along with a show-cause reply. It further ordered that respondent no. 2 must also be physically produced on the next date of hearing.

I-PAC's Chandel remanded to 14-day judicial custody

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday sent Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) co-founder Vinesh Kumar Chandel to 14 days' judicial custody in connection with a money laundering probe linked to an alleged coal pilferage case.

The order was passed by Additional Sessions Judge Dhirendra Rana of the Patiala House Courts, who directed that Chandel remain in custody till May 7 following the expiry of his Enforcement Directorate custody.

Earlier in the day, the court issued notice to the ED on Chandel's bail plea and sought its response, listing the matter for hearing on April 29. Previously, on April 14, another court had remanded him to ED custody for 10 days. Additional Sessions Judge Shefali Barnala Tandon had allowed custodial interrogation till April 23.

Chandel was arrested in connection with an ECIR registered on March 28, based on an FIR by the Economic Offences Wing, alleging criminal conspiracy, cheating, and falsification of accounts involving I-PAC. The ED alleged that he played a key role in generating and laundering illicit funds, including routing money through cash and banking channels and introducing ₹13.50 crore as unsecured loans without formal agreements.

ADVISORY TO TRAVELERS

NCB cautions Indian citizens on Maldives' anti-drug laws

NEW DELHI

In view of the Maldives adding more teeth to its anti-drug laws, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Thursday advised Indian citizens to avoid carrying to the island any package, baggage or item on behalf of others without being sure of the contents.

In an advisory issued ahead of the summer vacation season, the NCB cautioned Indian citizens travelling to or visiting the Maldives regarding the recent strengthening of anti-narcotics laws in that country and educated them against unknowingly becoming couriers for drug traffickers.

The NCB said in a statement that the recent legislative amendments to the Maldives' Drugs Act, effective from March 2026, prescribe significantly enhanced penalties for drug-related offences, including life imprisonment and, in certain cases involving large-scale trafficking, the death penalty, subject to confirmation by the competent court under the Maldivian law.

The amended law provides stricter punishment even for possession of small quantities of prohibited substances, the central agency added.

Recent instances have been reported involving foreign nationals, including Indian citizens, being arrested in the Maldives for drug-related offences.

In this regard, High Commission of India in Male has also issued advisories urging Indian nationals to strictly comply with local laws and regulations.

In view of the above, all Indian citizens are strongly advised not to carry any package, baggage, or item on behalf of others under any circumstances without being absolutely sure of the contents, the NCB said.

They are also advised to observe exercise extreme caution at airports, ports, and transit points when approached by unknown requesting carriage of goods, it added.

Advising Indian citizens to always ensure proper supervision of personal baggage, the NCB told them to be mindful of the fact that ignorance of the law is not a defence and any legal violations may result in severe punishments.

Indian citizens are urged to report any suspicious approach or incident at the MANAS National Narcotics Helpline '1933'.

The NCB reiterates its zero-tolerance approach towards drug trafficking and urges all citizens to remain vigilant, responsible, and law-abiding while travelling abroad, the statement said.

QUICK READ

Pope Leo heading back to Rome after outspoken Africa tour

MALABO

Pope Leo returns to Rome on Thursday after wrapping up an ambitious four-nation Africa tour in which he forcefully decried the direction of global leadership, denouncing despotism and war, and drew the ire of US President Trump. The first U.S. pope closed the nearly 18,000 km tour with a final Mass in a stadium in Equatorial Guinea, where tens of thousands began gathering in pouring rain before dawn for a last chance to see him. Leo told worshippers in a homily, his 25th speech over the 10-day tour, that the Christian message means every people is set free from the slavery of evil.

Iran war pushing more than 30 million back into poverty

BANGKOK

More than 30 million people will be pushed back into poverty by the impacts of the Iran war including disruptions to fuel and fertiliser supplies just as farmers are planting crops, UN development chief Alexander De Croo said. Fertiliser shortages - worsened by the blocking of cargo vessels through the Strait of Hormuz - have already lowered agricultural productivity, the Administrator of the UNDP. That would likely hit crop yields later this year, the former Belgian prime minister added. Food insecurity will be at its peak level in a few months and there is not much that you can do about it, he said.

Partner of Diana's brother settles lawsuit against his ex-wife

LONDON

The partner of Princess Diana's brother has settled her lawsuit against his ex-wife for alleged misuse of private information after she disclosed her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, London's High Court was told on Thursday. Catrine Jarman, a Norwegian archaeologist, sued the now ex-wife of Charles Spencer, uncle to the heir to the throne, Prince William, and his younger brother Prince Harry, in 2024. Jarman said Karen Spencer had disclosed her MS diagnosis, which she had sought to keep private, to a number of people shortly after Charles Spencer ended their marriage. Karen Spencer accepted Jarman's offer to settle the lawsuit in August, Jarman's lawyer Dina Shiloh said in a statement read at the High Court.

Iran tightens grip over Hormuz post peace talk collapse

Iran has demonstrated its growing control over the Hormuz by releasing dramatic footage of commandos seizing cargo ships, following the breakdown of crucial peace negotiations with the US

DUBAI

Iran state television aired striking visuals showing masked Iranian forces boarding a large cargo vessel, identified as the MSC Francesca.

The footage captured commandos arriving in speedboats, scaling the ship's hull using rope ladders, and entering with weapons drawn.

The video, styled with an action-film soundtrack and lacking commentary, also showed another vessel, the Epaminondas, which Iran claimed to have seized for allegedly attempting to cross the strait without proper authorization.Iranian officials stated that both ships were detained as part of newly enforced maritime regulations.

Vice-Speaker Hamidreza Hajibabaei announced that Iran had begun collecting tolls from vessels using the strait, with initial revenues already transferred to the Central Bank. However, he did not disclose details about the payments or the parties involved. Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei asserted that the targeted ships had faced the law, signaling a firm stance on enforcement.

The developments come after the collapse of peace talks that had aimed to reopen the vital shipping route, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies typically pass. Iran has effectively restricted access to the strait since February, when conflict escalated involving the United States and Israel. Tehran has insisted it will not reopen the route until Washington lifts its blockade on Iranian shipping, which it considers a violation of the ceasefire.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump refrained from resuming military action at the end of the ceasefire but has not agreed to lift the blockade, leaving the situation unresolved.

Residents in Tehran described a tense atmosphere, with uncertainty over potential renewed conflict. Despite the breakdown in talks, Pakistan, which had hosted earlier negotiations, remains engaged with both sides in an effort to revive diplomatic efforts and prevent further escalation.

US hosts talks as Lebanon seeks ceasefire extension with Israel

BEIRUT

The upcoming meeting comes amid renewed tensions, just a day after Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon killed at least five people, including journalist Amal Khalil.

The U.S.-mediated ceasefire, which took effect on April 16, has significantly reduced violence but has failed to completely halt hostilities. The agreement is set to expire on Sunday, raising concerns about a potential escalation.

Marked the deadliest day in Lebanon since the ceasefire began. Lebanese officials confirmed casualties from Israeli strikes, highlighting the fragile nature of the truce. Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, has maintained that it retains the right to resist what it describes as occupation by Israeli forces in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah stated that the group supports extending the ceasefire but only if Israel fully complies with its terms. Speaking at a televised press conference, he criticized direct negotiations with Israel and urged the Lebanese government to avoid any face-to-face engagement.

The conflict reignited on March 2, when Hezbollah launched attacks in support of Iran amid a broader regional war. Since then, nearly 2,500 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to official estimates. Israel has established a buffer zone extending several kilometers into southern Lebanon, claiming it is necessary to protect northern regions from rocket fire.

Israel's military has also warned residents of southern Lebanon against entering the occupied zone. Meanwhile, Hezbollah reported carrying out multiple operations in response to Israeli strikes, signaling that tensions remain high despite the ceasefire.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has instructed the country's envoy, Ambassador Nada Moawad, to push for an extension of the ceasefire during the Washington talks. Beirut is also expected to demand an end to Israeli demolitions in southern villages and advocate for a full Israeli withdrawal.

Beirut is intensifying diplomatic efforts as the United States prepares to host a second round of talks between Lebanese and Israeli envoys, with a focus on extending the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Lebanese officials emphasize that extending the ceasefire is essential before advancing to broader negotiations, which could include border delineation and the return of detainees. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts continue as regional and international stakeholders seek to prevent further escalation in the conflict.

17 INJURED AS 2 TRAINS COLLIDE IN COPENHAGEN

COPENHAGEN

The accident occurred early in the morning on a railway line connecting the towns of Hillerod and Kagerup.

Authorities reported that approximately 38 passengers were on board the two trains when they collided shortly before 6:30 am.

Emergency services described chaotic scenes inside the carriages, with shattered glass and severe structural damage visible on both trains.

Images from the scene showed two yellow and grey trains facing each other in a wooded area, both heavily damaged at the front. Fire and rescue service leader Christoffer Buhl Martekilde said the impact caused extensive destruction and sent debris flying through the compartments.

Rescue operations were launched immediately, with 18 emergency vehicles and 47 personnel dispatched to the site. All passengers were safely evacuated from the trains, and officials confirmed that no one was trapped. The injured were transported to nearby hospitals using ambulances and helicopters, as emergency teams worked to stabilize the situation.

Police stated that it was too early to determine the cause of the collision and confirmed that a thorough investigation would be conducted. Authorities are expected to examine factors such as signaling systems, track conditions, and operational procedures.

The incident drew international attention, with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson reaching out to Denmark's leadership to offer assistance. Acting Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen acknowledged the support as emergency efforts continued.

Rail accidents are relatively rare in Denmark, but the country has experienced serious incidents in the past. The most severe railway disaster in recent years occurred in 2019, when a train struck an obstacle during a storm, resulting in multiple fatalities. A separate accident in 2025 also led to casualties after a train derailed following a collision with a vehicle.

Authorities have urged the public to avoid speculation as investigations continue, emphasizing that determining the exact cause will take time.

US moots expanding refugee intake for white South Africans

WASHINGTON

The administration of Donald Trump is weighing plans to significantly increase the number of refugees admitted into the United States, with a particular focus on white South Africans, according to sources familiar with internal discussions.

The proposal under consideration would more than double the current annual refugee cap of 7,500 by adding up to 10,000 additional slots, primarily for Afrikaners; white South Africans of European descent.

This move follows an earlier executive order issued shortly after Trump took office in January 2025, which paused most global refugee admissions while prioritizing Afrikaners, citing claims of race-based persecution in South Africa. The South African government has strongly rejected these allegations.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, established in 1980 to assist people fleeing conflicts such as those in Vietnam and Cambodia, has historically served a broad range of displaced populations. However, under current policies, it has largely been used to resettle white South Africans, marking a significant shift in humanitarian priorities.

Data from the State Department indicates that around 4,500 South Africans have already been admitted as refugees in the first half of the fiscal year, putting the administration on track to exceed its existing cap. In contrast, only three refugees from other countries specifically Afghanistan have been admitted during the same period.

The administration has not officially confirmed the expansion plan. A State Department spokesperson stated that any changes to the refugee ceiling for fiscal year 2026 would be announced at an appropriate time, describing current figures as speculative.

The policy has drawn attention due to its historical and political context. During the apartheid era, which ended in 1994, South Africa enforced a system of racial segregation that privileged the white minority.

Chemical leak at Virginia plant kills 2

VIRGINIA

A chemical leak at a West Virginia silver recovery business on Thursday killed two people and injured 30 others.

The leak occurred at the Catalyst Refiners plant in Institute as workers were preparing to shut down at least part of the facility.

"A chemical gas reaction occurred at the plant involving nitric acid and another substance. Of those injured were seven ambulance workers.

Italy may scale back defence spending amid economic pressures

ROME

Rome has signaled potential changes to its defence spending strategy as mounting economic challenges and rising energy costs strain public finances, according to a new government budget document.

The government of Giorgia Meloni is facing increasing fiscal pressure after revising down economic growth forecasts while raising projections for budget deficits and public debt. The updated outlook reflects the impact of surging energy prices and instability linked to the Middle East conflict.

Italy's Treasury outlined these concerns in its multi-year budget plan, warning of limited fiscal flexibility as the country prioritizes support for households and businesses grappling with higher energy costs. Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti stated that the government may need to reassess spending priorities, including planned increases in defence expenditure.

Italy had previously committed, alongside other European members of NATO, to significantly boost defence spending following calls from Trump to raise it to 5% of GDP by 2035. In the short term, Rome's 2026 budget included plans to increase defence spending by 0.5% of GDP by 2028.

Woman gets 14-yr jail for treason in Russian-controlled Ukraine

MOSCOW

A court in Russian-controlled southern Ukraine has sentenced a woman to 14 years in prison on charges of treason after she purchased war bonds to support Ukrainian forces, highlighting the ongoing tensions in territories under Russian control.

The verdict was delivered by the Zaporizhzhia District Court, operating under Russian authority in occupied areas. According to officials, the woman used a Ukrainian mobile application to buy government-issued war bonds worth approximately 270,080 roubles, equivalent to around $3,600. Authorities stated that she was detained by Russia's federal security agency, the FSB.

The court identified the accused only by the initial B and described her as a Russian citizen. However, in territories seized during the ongoing conflict, residents have often been compelled to adopt Russian citizenship to maintain access to essential services such as healthcare, pensions, and property rights.

PATCHING UP

King Charles to visit US amid strained UK-US relations

LONDON

King Charles III will travel to the United States next week for the most significant overseas visit of his reign, aiming to reinforce the long-standing alliance between the two nations despite rising political tensions.

The four-day state visit marks the 250th anniversary of American independence from British rule, a historic milestone dating back to 1776 when 13 colonies broke away from King George III, an ancestor of King Charles.

The visit is expected to highlight the evolution of relations between the two countries, which have since developed deep military, economic, and cultural ties.

However, the trip comes at a challenging time. Relations between Britain and the United States have reached their lowest point in decades, with tensions reminiscent of the Suez Crisis. Disagreements have intensified following the Iran conflict, particularly after U.S. President Donald Trump publicly criticized British Prime Minister Keir Starmer for not supporting military action.

Despite these tensions, the visit is being framed as a reaffirmation of enduring ties beyond political differences. Former British ambassador to Washington, Nigel Sheinwald, emphasized that the trip is focused on long-term relations between the people and institutions of both nations rather than current political disputes.

Charles will be accompanied by Queen Camilla and is scheduled to begin the visit with a private meeting with President Trump. The itinerary includes an address to Congress, a formal state dinner, and visits to New York and Virginia, underscoring the importance of diplomatic and cultural engagement.

The visit has also attracted controversy back in Britain. Some political figures have questioned whether the trip should proceed given recent remarks by Trump.

Match-winning knock came on tricky pitch, says Jadeja

All-rounder credits patience, smart targeting for Rajasthan Royals' crucial victory surge

LUCKNOW

Ravindra Jadeja admitted that conditions were far from easy despite playing a match-winning role as Rajasthan Royals defeated Lucknow Super Giants by 40 runs in their Indian Premier League 2026 clash.

Reflecting on his composed 43 off 29 balls, Jadeja said the red-soil surface made stroke-making difficult due to variable bounce and seam movement. "When I was batting, it wasn't that easy out there," he noted, adding that building partnerships required patience and awareness. He emphasised the need to rotate strike while choosing the right moments to attack in T20 cricket.

Jadeja revealed a clear tactical approach during the death overs, particularly against express pacer Mayank Yadav. He said he capitalised on shorter boundaries and field placements to maximise scoring opportunities, ensuring Rajasthan posted a competitive 159/6 despite regular wickets.

In reply, Lucknow never found momentum and were bowled out for 119 in 18 overs. The Royals' bowling unit delivered a disciplined performance, led by Jofra Archer (3/20) and Nandre Burger (2/27), while support came from Brijesh Sharma. Jadeja also contributed with a key wicket, dismissing Nicholas Pooran at a crucial stage.

Speaking about his bowling, Jadeja said he deliberately varied his pace on a two-paced wicket. He observed that batters like Mitchell Marsh and Pooran struggled against slower deliveries that held up on the surface. "It's about reading conditions and adapting," he explained, underlining his flexible role in the side.

Jadeja also addressed his bowling workload, stating that completing his full quota depended entirely on team requirements.

IPL 2026

Starc cleared for IPL return, set to boost Delhi Capitals on May 1

NEW DELHI

Mitchell Starc has been cleared by Cricket Australia to return to the Indian Premier League, with the left-arm quick expected to feature for Delhi Capitals in their clash against Rajasthan Royals on May 1.

Starc has been sidelined since January due to elbow and shoulder niggles, missing the initial phase of the tournament. His return comes as a major boost for Delhi, who currently sit fifth on the points table with three wins and three losses from six matches.

The 36-year-old was last seen in action during Australia's victorious The Ashes campaign, where he played all five Tests and earned the Player of the Series award. He then featured briefly in the Big Bash League for Sydney Sixers before being ruled out to manage his injuries.

Australian pacer's comeback offers timely strength as Delhi eyes crucial turnaround

According to reports, Starc is currently building up his workload in India and is on track to make his IPL 2026 debut in the upcoming fixture. His presence is expected to significantly strengthen Delhi's pace attack, especially given his impact in the previous season, where he picked up 14 wickets in 11 matches and emerged as the team's leading fast bowler.

Starc's absence earlier had sparked debate around the participation of overseas players in the IPL. Responding to criticism, the Australian pacer had taken to social media to clarify his situation, stating that he was undergoing rehabilitation and managing injuries sustained during the Australian summer. He also criticised what he described as "misinformed opinions" regarding his commitment and fitness.

Meanwhile, other Australian stars are also making their way back into the IPL. Captain Pat Cummins is set to appear for Sunrisers Hyderabad, while Josh Hazlewood has already resumed duties for Royal Challengers Bengaluru after missing early matches.

RCB pacer ends legal battle, expressing regret and willingness to move forward amicably

NUWAN THUSHARA WITHDRAWS CASE, apologises to SLC over IPL 2026 dispute

COLOMBO

Nuwan Thushara, the fast bowler associated with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, has withdrawn his legal case against Sri Lanka Cricket after a dispute over a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for participation in the Indian Premier League 2026 season.

Thushara had earlier approached court alleging that Sri Lanka Cricket refused to issue him an NOC, citing concerns over fitness test results. However, during proceedings on Thursday, his legal counsel informed the district court that the player no longer wished to pursue the matter as most IPL matches this season were already underway.

Following this submission, the court accepted the withdrawal of the case. Thushara also issued an apology to Sri Lanka Cricket, expressing regret over the escalation of the issue and indicating his willingness to maintain a positive relationship with the board going forward.

The right-arm pacer, who has represented Sri Lanka in 30 T20 internationals since 2022, was expected to feature for Royal Challengers Bengaluru this season, having previously been part of the franchise setup in the 2024 and 2025 editions of the IPL. The controversy had briefly sparked debate over player availability and national board clearance policies, particularly in relation to franchise commitments versus international obligations. With the matter now resolved, Thushara is expected to focus on returning to competitive cricket without further administrative hurdles.

Trump envoy urges FIFA to swap Iran with Italy for World Cup: Report

WASHINGTON

US special envoy to President Donald Trump has reportedly urged FIFA to consider replacing Iran with Italy at the upcoming FIFA World Cup, according to a report.

The report says the suggestion is linked to broader diplomatic discussions involving the United States, Italy and ongoing geopolitical tensions surrounding Iran, as well as efforts to strengthen relations with Italian leadership.

Officials familiar with the matter said the idea was raised during informal conversations and has not been formally proposed within FIFA structures.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino had earlier stated that Iran remains qualified to participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026 hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Iranian officials have reiterated that preparations are underway for the national team's participation, despite ongoing diplomatic pressure and external calls for changes to tournament eligibility.

The proposal, as described in the report, has drawn attention due to its unusual nature, as FIFA selection processes are typically governed by qualification results and not political recommendations.

Neither FIFA nor the White House has officially confirmed the envoy's comments, and no formal policy discussion regarding team replacement has been acknowledged by governing bodies involved in World Cup planning.

The Financial Times report further noted that the suggestion is part of broader diplomatic signaling, although analysts have cautioned that such proposals are unlikely to influence official sporting governance.

Discussions around Iran's participation come at a sensitive time, with geopolitical tensions influencing international sporting narratives and increasing scrutiny of global tournament preparations.

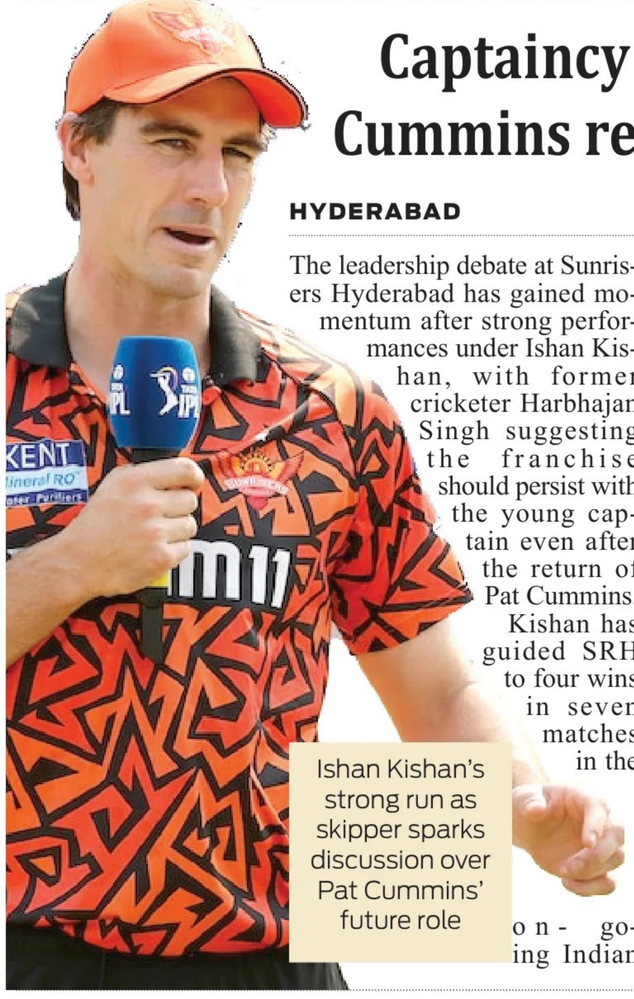
Italy, a four-time World Cup winner, has not been part of the qualification pathway controversy and remains one of Europe's most successful footballing nations historically.

The debate has sparked widespread discussion in sports media, highlighting the intersection of politics, diplomacy, and international football governance ahead of the 2026 tournament.

Weeks ahead of the tournament, uncertainty continues to surround administrative decisions, even as preparations for the expanded global competition move forward across host nations.

FIFA officials are expected to maintain focus on qualification rules while avoiding political influence in final World Cup squad determinations as the process remains strictly performance based according to report.

Captaincy debate intensifies at SRH as Cummins return fuels leadership question



Ishan Kishan's strong run as skipper sparks discussion over Pat Cummins' future role

HYDERABAD

The leadership debate at Sunrisers Hyderabad has gained momentum after strong performances under Ishan Kishan, with former cricketer Harbhajan Singh suggesting the franchise should persist with the young captain even after the return of Pat Cummins.

Kishan has guided SRH to four wins in seven matches in the ongoing Indian Premier League 2026 season, including a recent victory over Delhi Capitals in Hyderabad, helping the side climb to third place on the points table.

Cummins, who missed the early phase of the season due to a lower back injury, is now back with the squad and is expected to feature in the upcoming clash against Rajasthan Royals. His return has triggered discussions over whether leadership should revert to the Australian pacer, who previously led SRH to the final in 2024.

However, Harbhajan Singh has strongly backed continuity in leadership under Kishan. Speaking on JioHotstar's Champions Waali Commentary, he argued that SRH should not disrupt a system that is currently working well. He pointed out that the team has developed strong coordination under Kishan's leadership and warned against changing direction mid-season.

Harbhajan also acknowledged Cummins' past contributions but stressed that current form and team balance should guide decisions. His comments followed similar support from former coach Sanjay Bangar, who praised Kishan's tactical awareness and calm decision-making under pressure.

SRH's season under Kishan has seen early inconsistency, including losses to Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Lucknow Super Giants, and Punjab Kings. However, the team has since bounced back strongly with three consecutive wins over Rajasthan Royals, Chennai Super Kings, and Delhi Capitals.

KANE AND DIAZ FIRE BAYERN MUNICH INTO GERMAN CUP FINAL AFTER LEVERKUSEN WIN

LEVERKUSEN

Bayern Munich booked their place in the DFB-Pokal final with a commanding 2-0 victory over Bayer Leverkusen, powered by goals from Harry Kane and Luis Diaz.

The win marks Bayern's return to the German Cup final for the first time since 2020, ending their longest absence from the showpiece in Berlin in over two decades. The Bavarian giants, who hold a record 20 cup titles, kept their hopes of a treble alive following their recent Bundesliga success.

Kane broke the deadlock after 17 minutes, reacting quickest inside the box after a well-worked move involving Jamal Musiala and Diaz. The England captain finished emphatically after the ball slipped past the Colombian forward.

Leverkusen, the 2024 cup winners, attempted to respond through counter-attacks, with Nathan Tella forcing a sharp save from Manuel Neuer early in the second half. However, Bayern remained in control for most of the contest, limiting the hosts' clear chances.

Goalkeeper Mark Flekken kept Leverkusen in the game with several important saves, denying Kane and Diaz multiple times as Bayern pushed for a second goal to kill the tie.

The breakthrough moment came deep into stoppage time when Diaz finally got his reward, converting a pass from Leon Goretzka. The goal was initially ruled offside but was later awarded after a VAR review, confirming Bayern's passage to the final.

Speaking after the match, Kane expressed delight at reaching Berlin, describing it as a major objective for the team this season. He praised the squad's resilience in navigating a difficult knockout run, highlighting the importance of grinding out results in tough away fixtures.

Leverkusen, despite reaching their third consecutive semi-final, struggled to match Bayern's intensity on the night and were unable to replicate last season's success against the German champions.

With this win, Bayern continue their pursuit of a historic treble and will now prepare for the final, where they will face either VfB Stuttgart or SC Freiburg in Berlin.

Teen star injured while scoring penalty, raising concerns ahead of major tournament

World Cup worry for Spain as Lamine Yamal limps off injured for Barcelona

BARCELONA

Lamine Yamal sparked fresh concern ahead of the FIFA World Cup after suffering an injury during FC Barcelona's 1-0 win over Celta Vigo in La Liga.

The 18-year-old forward scored the only goal of the match from the penalty spot in the 40th minute but immediately showed signs of discomfort, clutching the back of his left leg. He quickly signalled to the bench and went down in visible pain even as teammates gathered to celebrate.

Yamal was able to walk off the pitch unassisted after receiving medical attention on the field. He later spoke briefly with Barcelona head coach Hansi Flick before heading into the tunnel alone, raising further concerns about the extent of the injury.

Barcelona did not issue an immediate update on the severity of the problem, stating that further medical evaluation would take place on Thursday. The uncertainty comes at a crucial time for both club and country, with Yamal expected to make his World Cup debut for Spain in June.

Teammates expressed concern after the match, with midfielder Gavi describing the situation as a "real blow" for the team and hoping the youngster recovers quickly. Another midfielder, Pedri, added that Yamal should remain calm and allow time for recovery given his age and importance to the squad.

Barcelona also suffered another injury setback in the match, with defender João Cancelo forced off with an apparent right leg issue in the first half.

Despite the injury concerns, Barcelona managed to secure all three points and extend their lead at the top of the La Liga table to nine points over second-placed Real Madrid, who won their match against Alavés earlier in the week.

The club now awaits medical reports on Yamal, with hopes that the injury will not rule him out for an extended period as the World Cup approaches.

QUICK READ

Gold, silver futures fall amid weak demand

NEW DELHI

Gold futures on Thursday fell by Rs 707 to Rs 1,51,950 per 10 grams due to lower demand in the spot market. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, June delivery contracts dropped 0.46 per cent with a turnover of 564 lots. Silver prices also declined by Rs 4,205 to Rs 2,44,159 per kg, with May contracts falling 1.69 per cent in 1,281 lots. Analysts said reduced buying interest affected prices, while global silver rates also slipped in New York trading.

Women lag behind in high skill tech jobs

NEW DELHI

Women remain underrepresented in high-skill technology roles despite forming 35–38 per cent of India's IT workforce, a report by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship and GAN Global said. It noted a 20–25 per cent gap in job readiness for specialised roles. While women make up 43 per cent of STEM graduates, their share drops below 20 per cent in core engineering fields. Only 14–16 per cent hold niche tech roles. The report warned of a 1.8 million talent gap by 2027 and stressed expanding apprenticeships.

Taiwan increases US oil imports to 60%

TAIPEI

Taiwan has raised its crude oil imports from the United States to about 60 per cent, marking a major shift in energy strategy, officials said. Earlier, US supplies made up around 30 per cent. Authorities said supply remains stable despite Middle East tensions, with shipments being rerouted to safer paths. Taiwan holds reserves for about 140 days. Officials expect steady prices near USD 90 per barrel, while new shipments, including a large oil tanker, are set to boost supplies soon.

Cong-era FTA with Korea poorly negotiated: Goyal

The Union Commerce and Industry Minister alleged that the deal created imbalance and widened India's trade deficit

- Bilateral trade rose 92.7% but India's imports surged 103.7%, widening deficit
- Renegotiations launched in 2015, with 11 rounds and an Early Harvest Package
- New JV between JSW Steel and POSCO for Rs 35,000 crore

NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday criticised the India–South Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed during the Indian National Congress rule, calling it "poorly negotiated" and unfavourable to India.

In a post on social media platform X, Goyal said the trade pact signed in 2009 and implemented in 2010 led to a 92.7 per cent rise in bilateral trade, but India's imports from South Korea rose by 103.7 per cent, increasing the trade deficit.

He said the agreement did not benefit India and claimed the current government has taken steps to correct the imbalance. Goyal noted that in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South Korea's President agreed to begin talks to amend the India–Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

He said eleven rounds of talks have already taken place, and both countries are now working toward a more balanced partnership. The revised agreement is expected to be completed by the end of 2026 or by mid-2027.

Goyal also said efforts to increase local manufacturing by Korean firms in India are showing results. He highlighted a joint venture between JSW Steel and POSCO to build a steel plant in Odisha with an investment of Rs 35,000 crore.

He added that several agreements were signed to improve trade, clean energy cooperation, supply chains, and MSME support.

Goyal said the government's goal is to ensure fair trade, strengthen local industries, and protect national interests through balanced global partnerships.

'AI brings risks, openings for fintech sector'

'India's economy remains strong, with GDP growth estimated at 7.6% for 2025-26'.

NEW DELHI

Banking Secretary highlights AI's dual role in fintech, urging responsible use while noting strong growth, financial inclusion gains, and India's rising global leadership in digital payments.

India's fintech sector is entering a new phase marked by higher expectations, growing risks, and complex systems, said M Nagaraju, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services, on Thursday.

Speaking at a fintech conference organised by FICCI, he described artificial intelligence as both a threat and an opportunity for the industry. He urged companies to use AI responsibly while exploring its full potential.

Looking ahead to Vision 2030, Nagaraju said AI will support financial inclusion by enabling smarter credit assessment. Tools using digital data like transactions, GST records, and telecom inputs can help lenders reach first-time borrowers and small businesses with better risk control.

He added that India's economy remains strong, with GDP growth estimated at 7.6 per cent for 2025-26. Banking sector health has also improved, with gross non-performing assets falling to 2.2 per cent and credit growth rising sharply.

Financial inclusion continues to expand through schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which has opened nearly 58 crore bank accounts. Other initiatives such as Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and PM SVANidhi have supported small businesses and street vendors. Nagaraju also highlighted the success of Unified Payments Interface, which handled over 22 billion transactions last month, making it the world's largest real-time payment system.

He said India's digital and financial progress positions it strongly for future growth, but stressed that responsible innovation will be key to balancing risks and opportunities in fintech.

'Bikaji' founder Agarwal passes away

NEW DELHI

Shiv Ratan Agarwal, founder of Bikaji Foods International, passed away, leaving behind a strong legacy in India's ethnic snacks industry.

Agarwal began his journey in the late 1980s in Bikaner, aiming to build his own identity beyond his family business. He took on the challenge of producing bhujia on a large scale at a time when suitable technology was not available. To achieve this, he travelled globally to develop methods that maintained the authentic taste of traditional snacks.

The brand "Bikaji" reflects cultural roots, inspired by Bika Rao, founder of Bikaner, along with a respectful suffix. Agarwal focused on taking Indian snacks to a wider audience while preserving traditional flavours.

Over the years, Bikaji grew from a regional brand into a national and international name, offering a wide range of products including bhujia, namkeen, sweets, and papad. The company now operates multiple manufacturing units across India, including facilities in Rajasthan, Assam, Karnataka, and other regions.

Dadashreeji proposes gross peace index at Global Summit

NEW DELHI

A global summit in London saw leaders discuss solutions while India highlighted peace-based progress ideas.

The fifth Commonwealth Trade and Investment Summit 2026 was held at Mansion House in London, bringing together leaders, ministers, and business figures from 56 nations. Organised by the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, the event focused on global challenges and cooperation across economies.

The summit, themed "Commonwealth Solutions to Global Challenges," included discussions on artificial intelligence, sustainable energy, infrastructure, health technology, and finance. It also featured closed-door meetings aimed at practical outcomes.

Representing India, spiritual leader Maitreya Dadashreeji delivered a talk titled "India - Leadership Through Change to Prosperity." He presented a unique view, stressing that real progress depends on inner balance, trust, and unity rather than only economic growth.

He introduced the idea of a "Gross Peace Index," suggesting countries should be measured not just by economic output but also by peace, trust, and social harmony.

He said such an approach could guide global partnerships and investments toward stability.

Maitreya Dadashreeji also urged leaders to move from power-focused governance to purpose-driven leadership. He said compassion and shared values are essential for long-term global progress.

The Commonwealth, with a population of about 2.7 billion, continues to serve as a major platform for collaboration among emerging and developed economies.

His proposal received attention at the summit, adding a new perspective to discussions usually focused on trade and economic growth. Experts noted that combining economic strength with social harmony could help create more balanced and sustainable development worldwide.

Hynix warns of prolonged HBM supply crunch

SEOUL

SK hynix has warned that demand for high-bandwidth memory (HBM) will exceed supply for at least the next three years, even as the company posted record-breaking quarterly earnings driven by strong artificial intelligence demand.

The chipmaker reported its highest-ever quarterly sales of 52.6 trillion won, while operating profit surged 405 per cent to 37.6 trillion won. Revenue crossed 50 trillion won for the first time, and operating margins rose sharply to 72 per cent, reflecting strong market conditions.

Company officials said the memory market is seeing a sustained upcycle, supported by demand for HBM, server DRAM, and enterprise solid-state drives. Despite the first quarter usually being a slower period, investments in AI infrastructure kept demand high.

Executives noted that supply constraints continue to limit the company's ability to meet all customer orders. As a result, buyers are focusing more on securing supply volumes rather than negotiating prices, pushing memory prices higher.

The company said wider use of long-term agreements could help stabilise demand and reduce the industry's usual price swings. It also highlighted that AI technology is evolving rapidly, increasing the need for advanced memory solutions across different applications.

SK hynix plans to introduce next-generation HBM4E samples later this year and begin mass production by 2027. It is also expanding its production capacity, including faster development of new facilities in Yongin to meet future demand.

Officials added that emerging technologies like advanced processing units will support, not replace, existing memory systems. A hybrid model combining different technologies is expected to drive continued demand for high-performance memory products in the coming years.

INDIA-GERMANY STRESS OPEN TRADE AMID WEST ASIA CRISIS

AHMEDABAD

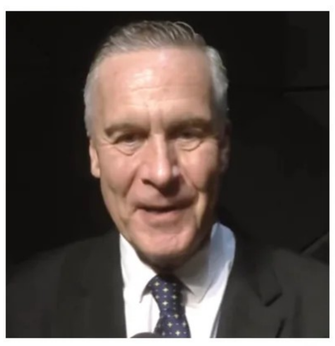
India and Germany must keep markets open and supply chains stable amid the ongoing West Asia crisis, said Jan Noether, Director-General of the Indo German Chamber of Commerce.

He said both countries depend heavily on free shipping routes, especially through the Strait of Hormuz, for transporting oil, gas, and essential goods. Disruptions in this route have affected trade flows and increased pressure on global supply chains.

Noether noted that the impact is already visible in Germany, where fuel and daily commodity prices have risen.

He said such disruptions quickly lead to higher costs for consumers and businesses.

He stressed that both India and Germany, as large economies, rely on free trade and strong business cooperation.



Ensuring smooth movement of goods is essential to maintain economic activity and partnerships.Noether also expressed hope for a political solution to ease tensions in the region. He said stability in global markets depends on resolving conflicts and restoring confidence in trade routes. His remarks come as global trade faces challenges due to geopolitical tensions, affecting energy supplies, pricing, and overall economic stability.

India Germany Urge Stable Trade Routes

India and Germany have called for keeping global markets open and supply chains stable amid the ongoing West Asia crisis. Indo German Chamber of Commerce Director-General Jan Noether said both nations rely heavily on secure shipping routes, especially the Strait of Hormuz, for transporting oil, gas, and essential goods. Disruptions have already impacted trade flows and increased global supply pressure. He noted rising fuel and commodity prices in Germany, warning that such shocks quickly affect businesses and consumers.

'EAC to PM focuses on policymaking, not crisis handling'

NEW DELHI

Nilesh Shah said the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister mainly acts as a "sounding board" for policymaking and does not handle daily crisis management.

In an interaction, Shah explained that the council supports the Prime Minister with policy inputs, unlike full-time institutions such as NITI Aayog or the Chief Economic Advisor's office. He said the council includes both full-time and part-time members, with most research handled by full-time members and the chairman.

He noted that the council meets regularly, about once every two weeks among members and twice a year with Narendra Modi, along with additional meetings when required. During periods of uncertainty, consultations may increase, but the focus remains on long-term policymaking rather than immediate crisis response.

Shah highlighted key contributions of the council, including efforts toward simplifying processes and improving patent efficiency. He said initiatives like the Jan Vishwas Bill have helped streamline procedures, while patent filings have increased due to improved systems.

He added that his personal role involves sharing insights from financial markets to support policy decisions. Shah also noted that the Prime Minister's Office sometimes seeks inputs from the council on specific policy matters.

His remarks come at a time of global economic uncertainty, where questions are often raised about government response systems. Shah clarified that while the council plays an important role in shaping policies, operational crisis management is handled by other government bodies.

Q-COMMERCE GROWTH

India RTD drinks market set for strong growth

NEW DELHI

India's ready-to-drink non-alcoholic beverage market is set for rapid expansion, driven by changing consumer habits and quick commerce growth.

India's ready-to-drink (RTD) non-alcoholic beverage market is expected to double from about $20 billion in 2025 to nearly $40 billion by 2030, according to a report by Redseer Strategy Consultants. The report highlights that the segment has entered a new growth phase supported by evolving buying patterns.

A major factor behind this rise is the rapid expansion of quick commerce, which has recorded over 100 per cent growth in the RTD category. Consumers are increasingly shifting from planned bulk purchases to instant, need-based buying, especially for beverages.

Despite this growth, India's per capita consumption of RTD drinks remains low at 15–20 litres compared to global levels. Consumption stands much higher in countries like the United States, China, and the United Kingdom, showing strong potential for further expansion in India.

The report also points to rising demand for healthier and functional beverages, including protein drinks, hydration products, and packaged coconut water. The coconut water segment alone accounts for 15–20 per cent of a $900 million category, with a significant share driven by quick commerce platforms.

Quick commerce as a whole is expected to grow from around $4 billion today to nearly $25 billion by 2030, capturing a large share of future demand. Experts say this trend is not limited to seasonal spikes but reflects a long-term shift in consumer behaviour.

Industry experts believe beverages will benefit greatly from these changes, as they are frequently purchased and often driven by impulse. Companies are now being advised to focus on innovation, pricing, and distribution strategies to tap into this expanding market effectively.

Aishwarya Rajesh's OH SUKUMARI Dubbing Begins

The makers of the upcoming Telugu film Oh Sukumari! have started the dubbing process, marking an important stage in post-production. The update was shared by Gangaa Entertainments on social media, where the team said the work began with a traditional pooja ceremony. The makers also promised that the film will offer a fresh and enjoyable experience for audiences in theatres.

The film stars Aishwarya Rajesh and Thiruveer in lead roles. Thiruveer, known for his work in The Great Pre Wedding Show, joins Aishwarya, who was recently seen in Sankranthiki Vasthunnam. This project marks the directorial debut of Bharat Dharshan, and it is produced by Maheswara Reddy Mooli under Gangaa Entertainments. The production house earlier gained attention for Shivam Bhaje, which received positive reviews.

The makers describe Oh Sukumari! as a light hearted comedy aimed at providing a new cinematic feel. The technical team includes cinematographer CH Kushendar, while music is composed by Bharath Manchiraju, an associate of MM Keeravani. The art department is handled by Thirumala M Thirupathi, and editing is done by Sree Varaprasad. Costumes are designed by Aanu Reddy Akkati, while lyrics are written by Purnachary. The shooting of the film began on November 19 last year. The team is planning to release the film in multiple languages, including Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada, aiming to reach a wide audience across regions. The makers believe that the simple story and comic moments will connect with viewers of all age groups. They said the film focuses on fun, emotions, and relatable situations that reflect everyday life. With dubbing now in progress, the team is working to complete post production smoothly. Further updates about the release date and promotions are expected soon. The makers thanked their cast and crew for their efforts and support throughout the journey.

Jon Favreau Admits He Misjudged TONY STARK Death Decision

Filmmaker and actor Jon Favreau has said he was initially against the decision to kill Tony Stark in Avengers: Endgame, but later realised the choice was right. Favreau, who played a key role in launching the Marvel Cinematic Universe with Iron Man, admitted he had concerns when directors Anthony Russo and Joe Russo planned the storyline.

Speaking on Jimmy Kimmel Live!, Favreau said he feared audiences, especially those who grew up watching Tony Stark, might find the ending too emotional. However, after watching the final film, he praised how the scene was handled with care and strong storytelling. He said the performances by Robert Downey Jr. and Gwyneth Paltrow added depth and made the moment more powerful. Favreau admitted that he was wrong in his earlier opinion and said the scene left him emotional.

He also revealed that despite Tony Stark's death, Downey is expected to return to the Marvel universe in a new role as Doctor Doom in the upcoming film Avengers: Doomsday. Favreau said he is excited to see how this new character will be presented on screen. Apart from Marvel, Favreau is currently promoting The Mandalorian and Grogu, part of the expanding Star Wars universe. He spoke about the challenges of bringing a television story to the big screen, saying it requires higher production quality, bigger sets, IMAX-style visuals, and advanced effects.

Rathna Kumar 29 Film OTT Rights Sold Ahead of Release

Director Rathna Kumar is preparing for the release of his upcoming film 29 The Film, which is set to hit theatres on May 8. The movie has already created buzz among audiences, with support from noted filmmakers Karthik Subbaraj and Lokesh Kanagaraj. Early promotions and updates have increased curiosity about the project.

In a major development, the OTT rights of the film have been acquired by Netflix even before its theatrical release. This early deal highlights the strong confidence in the film's content and its appeal to a wider audience. Securing a major streaming platform ahead of release is seen as a positive sign in the industry, reflecting expectations of good viewership after its theatre run. The Tamil Nadu theatrical rights of the film have also been sold for a significant amount, ensuring a wide release across the state. The distributor has previously handled films like Dejavu and Vithaikaran, along with major projects such as Thunivu and Are You Ok Baby. This association is expected to strengthen the film's reach.

The film stars newcomer Vidhu and Preethi Asrani in lead roles, along with Master Mahendran and Avinash in supporting roles. Set in the early 2000s, the story focuses on a love tale from a time before dating apps, highlighting simple emotions and relationships.

Music for the film is composed by Sean Roldan. Rathna Kumar, known for Gulu Gulu, returns with this project, which promises a nostalgic and emotional cinematic experience.

Kavin Announces Eleventh Film, Teams Up With Debut Director

Tamil actor Kavin has officially announced his 11th film, generating strong excitement among fans. The project will be directed by Praveen Paramasivan, marking his directorial debut in the industry. Known for his work in romance and comedy, Kavin is now stepping into an emotional family drama that focuses on relationships and real-life situations.

The makers have described the film as a complete family-based entertainer that reflects modern lifestyles and emotional bonds within households. It is being produced by the team behind the Tamil hit Happy Raj, making it their second production venture. The film aims to balance commercial elements with meaningful storytelling to appeal to a wide audience.

Praveen Paramasivan has earlier worked with the team of the critically acclaimed film Parking under director Ramkumar Balakrishnan. His collaboration with Kavin is expected to bring a fresh perspective to the narrative. The shooting of the film is scheduled to begin by the end of May, and more details about the cast and crew are likely to be announced soon.

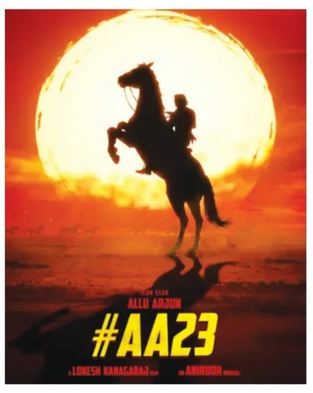
Meanwhile, Kavin is also working on another project alongside Nayanthara in the film Hi. Directed by Vishnu Edavan, the movie is expected to be a romantic family entertainer. Its first single, Kannakkuzhiyum Pudhaguzhuyum, written by Jen Martino and sung by GV Prakash Kumar, has already attracted attention for its emotional tone. With his upcoming lineup of films, Kavin continues to expand his range as an actor, exploring different genres and stories. The announcement of his 11th film highlights his growing presence in Tamil cinema and raises expectations for another engaging and relatable story on the big screen.

Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan Reunite For Anees Bazmee Film

Actor Akshay Kumar has announced his fourth collaboration with Vidya Balan for an upcoming film directed by Anees Bazmee. The actor shared the update on social media, posting a video of the two boarding a flight and hinting that they are heading to Kerala for the shoot.

In his post, Akshay expressed excitement about working again with Vidya Balan and hoped their on-screen pairing would continue its successful run. The announcement quickly gained attention, with fans reacting positively and sharing their anticipation for the project. The duo has previously worked together in popular films such as Bhool Bhulaiyaa, Heyy Babyy, and Mission Mangal. Their collaborations have been well received by audiences, making this reunion highly anticipated. However, further details about the new film, including its title and storyline, are yet to be revealed.

Allu Arjun & Lokesh Kanagaraj's AA23 Shooting Begins in May



Icon Star Allu Arjun and filmmaker Lokesh Kanagaraj are set to collaborate for their upcoming project, tentatively titled AA23. The film is expected to go on floors in May, with makers aiming to create a large-scale production with global appeal.

The latest update was shared by co-writer Rathna Kumar during an interaction, where he revealed that the story is designed to connect with audiences beyond India. He said the film is being planned as a true pan-India project, not just because of its star cast, but due to its storyline, which carries an international flavour. Rathna Kumar also spoke about working with Allu Arjun, describing the experience as exciting and collaborative. He said the team has already spent several weeks discussing the script and shaping the film's vision. According to him, preparations are moving quickly, and shooting is expected to begin in the second week of May. The collaboration between Allu Arjun and Lokesh Kanagaraj has created strong buzz among fans, as both are known for delivering major hits. Recently, the director shared a picture with the actor while celebrating the success of the film's theme music, composed by Anirudh Ravichander, which has gained popularity online.

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun is also working on another big project titled Raaka, directed by Atlee. The film stars Deepika Padukone in the lead role and is currently under production.

With two major projects in progress, Allu Arjun continues to expand his presence across different markets. The upcoming film with Lokesh Kanagaraj is expected to combine strong storytelling with large-scale production, aiming to reach audiences both in India and internationally. Fans are eagerly waiting for more updates as the shoot begins soon.

PRITHVIRAJ SUKUMARAN'S KHALIFA RELEASE DATE SET FOR ONAM 2026

Malayalam actor Prithviraj Sukumaran is gearing up for his upcoming action thriller Khalifa, directed by Vysakh. The makers have officially announced that the film will release in theatres on August 20, 2026, coinciding with the Onam festival season.

The announcement was made by the actor's official team, Poffactio, through social media.

The post hinted at the lead character Aamir Ali and confirmed the release date, creating excitement among fans.

Many followers reacted positively, expressing high expectations for the film and its music.

Khalifa is currently in the shooting stage and is expected to be a high-energy action thriller. The story is written by Jinu V Abraham, who is also co-producing the project. The film's music is composed by Jakes Bejoy, while cinematography is handled by Jomon T John. Editing is being done by Chaman Chakko.

The makers have also revealed plans for a prequel to Khalifa, which may feature Mohanlal in the lead role. Reports suggest that Mohanlal could also make a brief appearance in the current film, raising curiosity about how both stories will connect.

Prithviraj Sukumaran was last seen in Vilaayath Budha, directed by Jayan Nambiar. Apart from Khalifa, he is also part of a major upcoming project titled Varanasi, directed by SS Rajamouli. In the film, he is set to play a key antagonist opposite Mahesh Babu.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.